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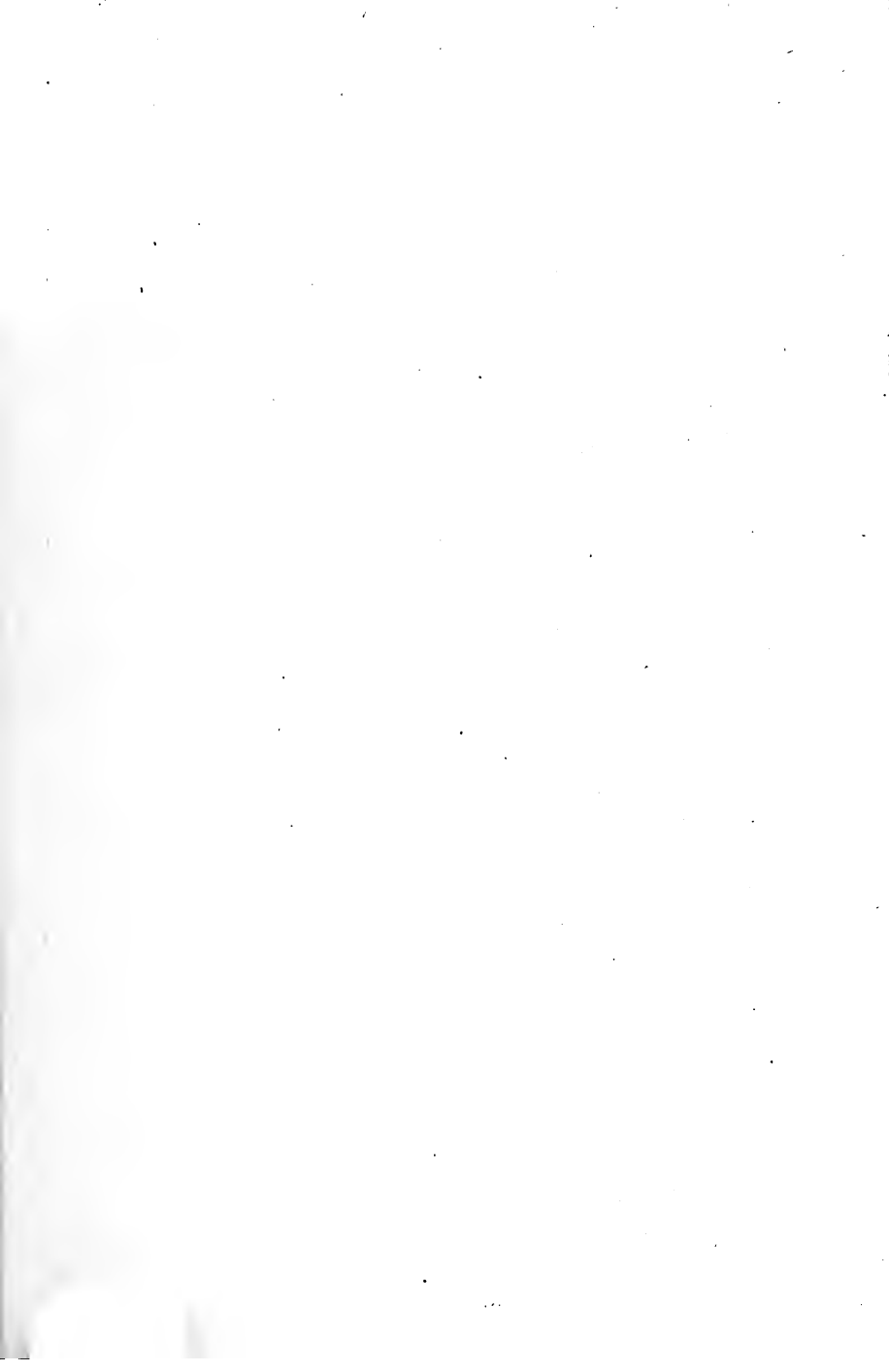
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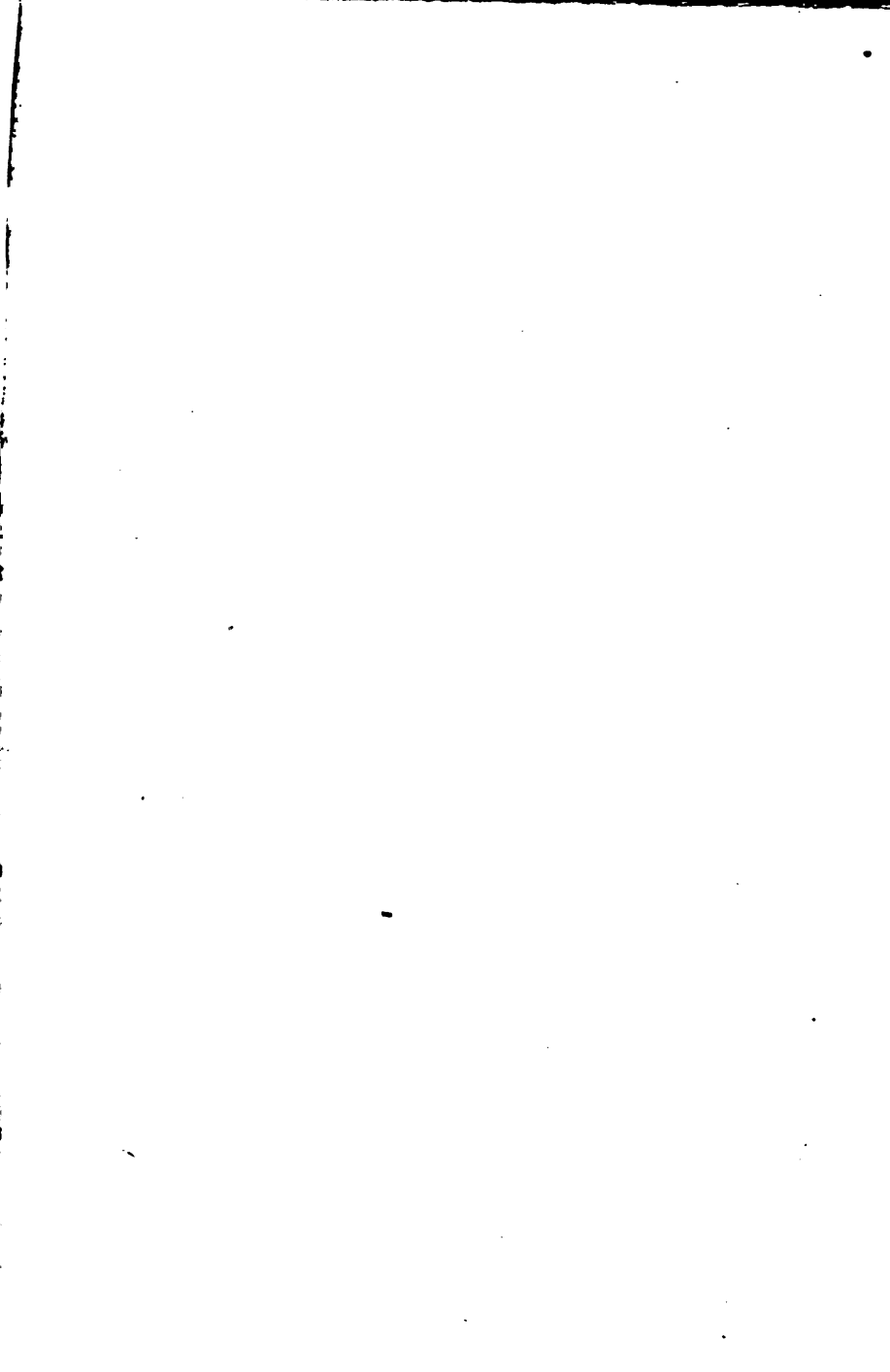
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ALICE OF THE INN

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A TALE OF THE
OLD COACHING DAYS

BY
JOHN W. SHERER, C.S.I.

Author of "Who is Mary?" "Helen the Novelist," etc., etc.

"Happy will our nature be
When love is an unerring light"
WORDSWORTH

VOLUME THREE

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ALICE OF THE INN.

CHAPTER I.

AN IDEA OF MY OWN.

AS we neared Pie Court, I heard Emily's piano ; so she at least had not gone to bed. She had moved the instrument from the Vicarage—for of course Mrs. Loftus, *née* Nursey, did not require it. When I knocked, Emily herself came to the door, and our veiled figures, in the dark night, and the fantastic glimmer of the lantern, were, as may be imagined, exactly to her fancy. We had been a little afraid of Hector, but she told us he was left at night to take care of the Vicarage. The kitchen fire was not out, and we made it up for the chambermaid to sit by, and ourselves drew round the parlour chimney.

The house was not laid out for a dining-room and a drawing-room, so the principal chamber was called the parlour—a spacious low-roofed apartment, with

the fireplace in a kind of alcove—very cosy in a cold wind. Meals were taken in a smaller room at the back.

“Has Miss Fosh gone to bed?” I asked.

“She has gone to her room, but she cannot be in bed; she is probably praying that the Ginger Drops may not rise up and accuse her at the last day.”

“I am going to make a momentous proposal, Emily, and I should like her to be present.”

“All right,” cried she, and rushed upstairs, and soon brought Miss Fosh down, in a bright blue dressing-gown, trimmed with red, and her hair entirely tucked away under a nightcap. She apparently dressed rather than undressed for bed, for the broad strings of her head-covering were crossed, and brought forward above her forehead, being secured there by a small brooch.

To begin with, I told all that had occurred during the day—the double discovery—first, that the lady was my mother, and then that she was also the same woman who had jilted Mr. Traill.

Emily was breathless with attention whilst my narrative lasted; but when it came to an end she was very funny.

“No, no, Alice,” she cried, “you are overdoing it. You are committing a breach of the ‘Arabian Nights.’ After the tale of your desertion, you ought to have

observed that the morning was beginning to break, and then your Traill story would have done for the seventy-sixth night, or whatever the number might be. You give a romance in too strong doses. Why, you are the child of miracle ! ”

I did not quite like this tone. Perhaps I am a little superstitious, without always remarking it. Anything resembling what are called special interferences rather frightened me, as seeming to call for exceptional conduct. I could offer nothing but straightforwardness, and a determination not to betray my own heart.

“If you reflect, Emily,” I said, “part of what I have related is scarcely romance at all. A mother deserts a child at a place where she believes it will certainly be taken care of. She deserts it because, in her belief, its presence would testify perpetually to a terrible misfortune, and because to the child itself a knowledge of its own ill-fate might prove hurtful. Mind, I don’t say she was right. Well, years pass. She finds out that the poor child had no shame connected with its birth, and she returns to the place where she had left it, and recovers it.”

“O come, Alice, what next ? ” exclaimed Emily. “Very few people put a baby down on a bed and come back for it twenty years after ; and still fewer, would be at all likely to find it again.”

"At any rate, you must believe it," I answered, laughing. "It is no use having a biography that is not credible. Of course it was a coincidence that Mr. Traill should stop at our inn. But then you must remember that his subsequent wishes, his will, the bequest, and all the rest of it, were suggested by my likeness to my mother; and it is quite natural that a daughter should be like her mother. However," I added, "be my story melodramatic or not, what I have now to say is eminently practical, and listen, therefore, both of you, with all your ears.

"I mean to marry Martin Welfare, the younger. The Delafields are very glad, at least they say so, to have found me; but finding him is another business. A young yeoman hanging about Cavendish Square might hinder their rise in English society. They might polish me up a bit, but no pains would make a dancing-master of Martin. My mother says Mr. Delafield would adopt me, and I should be considered an heiress, and might perhaps marry rank.

"But suppose I did, I should never be happy. If we had two lives, I might marry Martin in one and figure in the other as Delafield's daughter. But I have one poor little life, and the spring of it has been brightened by Martin's love; and, if my summer were darkened with selfishness and infidelity, what would my autumn and winter be?"

"Well done, dear child," interrupted Emily, "we are getting on. We shall soon have a volume of poems, 'Rosebuds,' by May Rose. Oh! how sweet."

"Leave off, please, and let me finish. A mother has every claim on the affections, and I am proud indeed to have had mine returned to me. I could love her tenderly if she would let me do so in my own way. She does not like the idea of Martin. But as for his hanging about Cavendish Square, he is a great deal too proud to go near them if he thought he was not welcome. But I could pay short visits, and could write; and, moreover, would always be ready to help in case of sickness or emergency. But if she pushes me to decide whether I will be Martin's wife or Delafield's daughter, there will not be one instant's hesitation. What was your German ballad, Emily, you used to be fond of quoting?—with the man the party referred to loved, heaven,—and without him the other place?"

"Quite near enough," said Emily, smiling; "words a little dislocated, but sentiment correct."

"And now I come," I continued, "to what I have been brooding over for hours. Mind you, I am speaking without the slightest authority. The idea has its origin in my own brain, and not a soul has the remotest suspicion that such an idea has been originated at all.

"It is Mr. Delafield's dream to adopt a daughter;

my mother told me so. He wishes to pose—so I take it—as the responsible guardian of a girl who, as heiress to his money, will, at any rate, attract considerable notice. Mother declares he was satisfied with me, and was pleased I was not more common. Those were not her words, but her real meaning was that I was not so far gone but that the inn might gradually be obliterated, and milliners and hosiers would make something of me.

“But the fact is I cannot possibly serve their purpose; at least I do not think so. If they take Alice they must take Alice and Co., Alice and Martin, and Eli Boston and his partner, and I won’t leave out poor old Joe Turnbull. If not satisfied with my conditions (and I do not see how he can be), Mr. Delafield must find another to pass as heiress. If he likes hereafter to leave (or better still to give) Martin and me a little money we shall not refuse it; but we do not mean to be dependent on anyone. There is my private money, and if there was not we should still have our youth and our wits, and our arms and hands. Martin and Alice mean to face life and the world, standing shoulder-to-shoulder.

“Well now, Emily, you must not be angry, but I have been thinking of this,—suppose Mr. Delafield adopts you instead of me?”

“O, don’t talk nonsense, Alice,” cried Emily; but

she started to her feet with flashing eyes. "Why on earth *should* he adopt me? He has never heard my name, and I have no more claim on him than has—who shall I say?—anybody.—Kate Chaffinch."

"That is all very true," I replied, "but let me go on a little bit further. You can have confidence in me; you know I would not say anything that could compromise you in the smallest degree or wound your pride or your sensitiveness. But I just want to ask if by any chance there should be such a proposal,—if these good people should cast a longing eye on you, as likely, with your Lord Steepleton, etc., to carry them flying into the upper circles, and glorify their first appearance in the metropolis,—if, I say, such a mad notion, if you like to call it so, should arise in their bewildered minds, need I tell them flatly, and once for all, that such a thing is wholly out of the question?"

Neither of my companions spoke a word, and I went on,—

"I am not so silly as to flatter you, Emily, nor such a make-believe as to depreciate myself; but we both have our own qualities. I think I shall be pretty trustworthy as a housewife, but I am essentially home-keeping, unambitious, domestic, contented. If you, on the other hand, are not calculated to shine in society, who is? You have the germs of accomplish-

ments, which will come to flower under cultivation ; you have wit and beauty and the air of a princess."

"Hold hard—enough!" bawled Emily. "Not so silly as to flatter, eh ; I don't know. It is like being dead, and hearing one's epitaph read out ; and about as true as epitaphs generally are."

"Now, Emily, do not add any more just now," I enjoined, "let our friend speak. Dear Miss Fosh, do let us hear what you think."

"Well, my dear," she said, smiling her little drawn smile, "it is rather like asking how I should like the larks cooked, and then telling me you want to know, because if the sky falls you hope to catch them. There is not the slightest reason for supposing that Mr. Delafield wishes to adopt Emily, nor has ever thought of doing so ; and yet you inquire if he did so wish and propose, what should I say ? I should say if Emily had a father who required her to look after him, if Emily had relatives to advance her interests, and who would guarantee her support and an arena for her abilities ; or if she had money of her own, or any sort of career suited to her in prospect ; if there was no chance of her talents wasting—her youth and beauty slowly fading, and disappointment setting in early, and intensifying as it became more confirmed—then I should advise, if such an offer was made, that she should ask for time for reflection."

"And if none of the conditions you mentioned existed," I asked, "what then?"

"I should say, without even a moment's consideration; for why should you hesitate, when the *pros* obviously predominate and the *cons* are virtually nowhere, to close at once with the proposal?"

"We are talking utter nonsense," said Emily; "but jumping with the humour of the moment, I declare I should have no objection to accepting such an arrangement were it not for leaving my dear old friend here."

"It is very nice of you to say that," replied Miss Fosh; "but though I love you, Emily, I had to go on before I knew you, and I would far rather go on without you in the future than stand for one instant in the way of your happiness. I do not undervalue your bright face in Pie Court parlour, but it would make the place almost as cheerful if here, alone by the fireside, I could read that you were succeeding in the world, as I believe you certainly would, should the opportunity be given you."

"I am sure," I said, "you both thoroughly understand me. You have been listening only to the whims of a young woman whose brain, from perpetual doses of surprise, has become partially disordered. That young woman has got out of you exactly what she wanted to know—namely, how you would like

your larks cooked. And now, nothing remains but to look up at the sky and see if there are any apparent signs of its giving way."

"Alice, you tiresome thing!" cried Emily, "you have set me off. The creature in the 'Arabian Nights' (with which work I shall always associate you) who sat by his basket of eggs, and in a few minutes was going to marry the Vizier's daughter, was not a more rapid visionary than I am. Pie Court may be considered my basket of eggs, and you have thoroughly disabled me for the proper pursuits of my usual life."

"You cannot be better employed than in dreaming," I said, quoting her own words used to me a short time before.

When I got home I was so tired, I fell asleep without a moment's delay on getting into bed, and so was able to be up at the usual time. I told my uncle I had been urged to go upstairs to breakfast, but preferred to stay with him and aunt.

"Well, lass," he said, "you would oblige me if you went. I know your kind heart, and partner and self are quite assured of your love. But I should not like to seem to be keeping you from your relations, and I should be pleased if you would breakfast with them."

I saw he was in earnest, and so at half-past nine I went up. Mr. Delafield was by himself. He was very gratified at my coming.

"Julia is a little knocked up. She will not come out to breakfast. She fancied you would not be here." He insisted on my pouring out the coffee and presiding.

"This is just as it should be, Alice. You must believe you have found a father as well as a mother, and your proper place, when madame is away, is at the head of your father's table."

He was very gentle and kind. But when the meal was over, he began talking on the subject which was evidently uppermost in his thoughts.

"Alice, dear," he said, "Julia tells me that you have engaged yourself to be married."

"That is true," I said.

"I do not the least wonder at it. You are just the sort of cheerful, handy girl a fine young countryman would take a fancy to. But when he proposed to you, he did so in ignorance of your position, and that not only alters the case, but might well suggest to him that it would be taking an unfair advantage of you to insist upon the fulfilment of a contract made under quite different circumstances. He is not about here now?"

"No, he is in Canada."

"When will he return?"

"In the summer, I hope."

"If he would come to me in London, I feel sure I

could put matters in such a light that he would not be unwilling to release you."

"But I do not wish to be released."

"I am not the man to urge you for a moment to be untrue to your past. But I assure you it is my sincere belief that, after new scenes and new society in London, the whole affair would change its aspect. The hero would not seem a hero, and I dare say, in your fashionable dresses, and when you had inevitably assumed a certain air of restraint, the fine, blunt son of the soil would find you no longer the sort of girl to suit him."

"Then I am certain of one thing," cried I.

"What is that, dear child?"

"That I ought never to go to London."

He was rather amazed at this.

"You will wonder that an American should talk as I do. I know perfectly that your young lover is as good as anyone else. But still we must recognise facts. And it is a stubborn fact that money, bringing as it does in its wake new tastes, new wants, new notions of what is enjoyable, makes its mark on character. And further, that the presence of books, pictures, works of art, and so on, and the possibility of meeting eminent people, create artificial distinctions to this extent—that those who have these advantages do not, as a rule, get on very well with those who have them not.

Theoretically one man is as good as another; supposing their natures to be equally estimable, but one man is not as suitable as another under given conditions."

"I cannot argue," I exclaimed; "I only know what I feel. I would sooner be left on a desert island with the man I love than live in a palace with anyone else."

"You think so now," he responded, but very kindly; "we all go through our Paul and Virginia period."

"Come!" I interrupted, "I have read that book, for a wonder, at Daventry. But the two were only parted by death."

"Ah, well!" he said laughingly, "I can't argue. But listen; Julia informs me you are considered a small heiress down here. It is most strange you should have been left money by a former friend of your mother. Tell me what is the nature of the property, and what is the income likely to be?"

I explained to him as well as I could the grant of a rent-free or tax-free tenure, and made it clear to him why Mr. Marlo had gone to India.

"There will always be expense and trouble connected with the collections, I expect," remarked Mr. Delafield; "still, after all deductions and remissions (for I am told that there are famines still in India), if you get £300 or £400 a year that will be very nice for you. Of course, if you come to us you will have complete control over your private fortune. We shall give

you a home, and you will have every claim recognised a daughter would be justified in putting forward. I suppose, if your swain could get your money, he would give up work and hunt and shoot?"

"O dear, no!" I cried, "nothing of the sort. My money would all be wanted to set us up in some really paying business."

I told him of old Mr. Welfare's plan of providing harness horses for the London market, and said if we joined him we should have to look out for risks; the delicate health of many horses, some again turning out unsuitable, and some developing hereditary complaints, like roaring, etc. We should most likely, too, have to raise capital on my income, and till the concern really took root, so to speak, the expenses would be sure to exceed the profits. I may have been a little tedious, because I understood matters of that kind.

"You speak of your future, Alice May," Mr. Delafield remarked, "as if you were quite determined to marry. Have you really set your heart upon this young man?"

"I have, indeed."

"But you cannot have had time yet to reflect what a great, what a very great disappointment such a union would be to us. I won't speak so much of myself, because my connection with you is, in a measure, accidental. But your mother, Alice May,

will be grievously hurt. She has a great regard for Mr. Rose's memory, and she is earnestly desirous that you should turn out worthy of him. Think what claims a mother has."

"But," I rejoined, "if my mother would permit me, I would come and pay short visits. If you did not wish for Martin Welfare, he would let me go alone. He would never intrude. He is quite as proud in his own way as you or mother are in yours. And to any sick bed, or to lessen any household trouble, I would dutifully fly."

"O, but Alice May, it is not the same thing. We want you to cast in your lot with us.

"With your new circumstances new duties have arisen. You owe to yourself as well as to us to look higher. You cannot lose social rank without losing self-respect. It is weak and limp to throw away opportunities. We have no resentment against Mr. Martin Welfare. We think he made an excellent choice. And if he is an open, frank-hearted British farmer, as we have every reason to suppose, I am sure he would not blight your hopes for his own gratification, and rob us of the treasure we have only just found."

"I fully appreciate," I answered, "the immense privilege of having regained a mother, and one of whom I can be so proud. And I would gladly divide

my duty and my affections between Martin and my own parent. But I entreat you not to make the two claims antagonistic."

"Can you hesitate between the mother who bore you and a stranger who wooed you, in perfect ignorance of circumstances which entirely alter your relative positions?"

"I cannot."

"What is the exact meaning of that answer?"

"That if my mother insists upon my making a choice, I shall not hesitate. I earnestly wish to possess both. If this cannot be—if I am driven to say one or the other—I say Martin."

Mr. Delafield turned his head away for a moment, and then, as if constrained to drop the subject, remarked, in a different tone, "Your mother spoke of some suitable and valuable friend you have here."

"She meant Miss Loftus."

"Where does she live?"

"Down the village, at Pie Court."

"She is the vicar's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Then, why does she not live at the Vicarage?"

"Her father has made a second marriage."

"I should like very much to call on Miss Loftus, and thank her for her kindness to you. I dare say you value her advice."

"I will take you there, with pleasure."

"Shall we say twelve o'clock?"

"Certainly. I will be ready."

"Then I will go and try and sooth your dear mother a little. She will be out at luncheon."

I wrote a wee note to Emily just to give warning we were coming, and to declare that the call originated entirely with Mr. Delafield, and had no connexion with what we had talked about over-night. And one of the yard boys was to have two-pence if he was back again in a quarter of an hour.

I was afraid that following so soon after the enunciation of my quaint idea, the visit might look like part of a scheme of my hatching for calling attention to Emily's position.

At twelve, my step-father and I started for Pie Court, and were welcomed by Hector, who stayed with his mistress in the day time, and was very pleased to see me, showing his hilarity by walking exactly before me, and seriously impeding progress. Both Emily and Miss Fosh had had time to beautify, and the green mittens of the latter, with red seams, were exceedingly dressy. Emily wore mourning for poor Eugene.

Mr. Delafield was profuse in his acknowledgments to both ladies, said he had been told of their kindness to his dear step-daughter so recently dis-

covered, and his thanks were especially due to Miss Loftus, who had chosen Alice May as a friend and a companion.

"I do not know that I chose her," said Emily "Somebody must have suggested the comradeship, but I think it was Alice. She called out one day, like the lady in the German play, 'A sudden thought strikes me—let us swear eternal friendship;' and we did."

"I have not known Alice long," remarked Miss Fosh, "but I like her. I do not remember having ever done anything for her. But if I have, the motives must have been partially selfish, for I was conferring a great pleasure on myself."

I was rather glad when the talk turned off me to some general subject, but was surprised when our visit was closing to hear Mr. Delafield say to Emily: "Mrs. Delafield would have called on you herself to-day, but she is a little knocked up. You will easily conceive that what has come out in this village has agitated her. But should you think me presuming on a short acquaintance if I pressed you to return with us to luncheon? And if Miss Fosh will accompany you, we shall be truly glad to see her. We may be going to-morrow."

A landlady's thought shot through me: "I hope there is enough for a nice luncheon."

But one or two things in the larder occurred to me, and I was re-assured.

Miss Fosh excused herself on the score of the March wind, but Emily consented to accompany us with alacrity.

My mother was up and dressed when we got to our place, and was very courteous and cordial to Emily. To me, too, she was gentle, but there was a reproach in her looks, and certainly some constraint in her manners.

Emily was charming, quite at her best ; full of her bright, quick thoughts, but subdued also, as she had been, more or less, since her great sorrow.

As Mr. Delafield had incidentally mentioned that they might be going the next day, I felt assured that he and my mother had seen that my adoption of their life and associations, to the abandonment of my own, was impossible, and for the time, at least, they were giving up the expectation that I should yield to their wishes.

I felt accordingly very anxious to utilise the little time remaining for making matters smooth, and preparing to part on good terms. So I proposed to Emily that I should lend her Pollard's colt (as my gray was still, sometimes, inappropriately called) for a ride, and she divining at once that I wanted to devote myself to my mother, said that she should go home and put

on her habit, and the exercise would suit her better than anything. When she had gone, Mr. Delafield remarked, "What an attractive girl your friend is! Now, I am going for my walk, and you must see after Julia, like a dutiful daughter."

A strange afternoon that! My mother in all sorts of moods. She began with endearments. What a benevolence of heaven it was that her union with Henry Rose should have turned out as honourable and distinguished as it was tender and true.

And the child of her only love restored to her arms!

I acquiesced naturally in admitting the great relief she must have experienced, in finding her marriage with my father all that could have been wished, and I was ready to express my pride at being Mr. Rose's daughter.

But when the moral came—could a child thus found be ungrateful, wilful, inaccessible to reason and common sense? I was glum. And at this, she actually descended to invective. I won't put down on paper anything that was said against Martin, but it can be imagined. Let him marry in his own class;—a pretty barmaid or the girl that opened the gate at the toll-bar would be better suited for him. That was the line. And I, too, was accused of low tastes, of having picked up my fancies in bar-rooms, of being taken

with whiskers, and not minding swearing and questionable jokes ; and then, when I suppose my lip quivered, and the tears came into my eyes, my mother gave vent to passionate cries for forgiveness, with plentiful kissing, and declarations that my hardness maddened her.

When I recall all she said, it seems incredible but it was really the case that she founded one of her claims to gratitude from me on the fact that she had not hesitated to lacerate her own heart and abandon me rather than that I should grow up ashamed of my birth, and subjected to all the slights and indignities which a supposed unsanctioned union between parents inflicts on their offspring.

Occasionally a gust of pride came in. Her advances had never been refused before. It had always been thought a privilege that she should desire the friendship and society of anyone. She had never been accustomed to the cold shoulder ; and to be repulsed thus—by her own child—impossible !

Nor were streaks of angry satire wanting. Where did I get my predilections ? Was it from the Roses or the Brindleys that I had learned to regard it life's highest aim—to bring in soup and ogle a coachman ?

Having been brought up without a mother, however much I may have longed after such a relation-

ship, I had not those impetuous instincts which sometimes blind people to the faults of so intimate a relationship ; and I was therefore able calmly to consider exactly what claims my new-found mother had on me, and how I felt towards her.

To begin with—I was proud of her. She was certainly a striking woman. Her appearance, though artificial, was very taking, and she could assume caressing manners which were almost irresistible.

But I could not but be aware of some insincerity and of a certain amount of acting, which, perhaps, when once intentionally acquired, it was very difficult to shake off.

Then I had to consider that my conduct, though I knew it was right, *was* disappointing to her. She expected a daughter only too eager to leap into her arms, and confide entirely in her instructions ; and she found one entirely bent on carrying out her own wishes. Part of my duty was quite clear.

There was to be no recrimination. Whatever was said I must bear it ; and I would allow no one to express any harsh opinion of my mother. And unkind strokes were not to be brooded over and resented, but attributed to excitement and disappointment.

I would really love my long-absent parent if she would allow me to love her without acting against my

conscience and my heart ; and, if trouble should arise, I felt certain I could be devoted.

Another part of my duty was not quite so clear. Mr. Delafield and my mother both seemed to scoff at the short visits I had spoken of ; and I was tempted to try and give them a wide berth ; and the idea had come into my mind, if they do ask a short visit now, I won't go.

But I was not sure that this feeling was right. Perhaps, so far as was compatible with retaining my own intentions, I ought to cultivate their society.

This point would clear itself up as time went on.

My mother's last shot was this :

She entreated me to come to London with them the next day unconditionally.

Nothing was to be said either one way or the other about Martin. It would not be considered that I in any way pledged myself, by joining them, to change my mind, or even reconsider my resolutions.

I was just to put myself in the milliners' hands, try a refined life of elegant pleasures, and see how I liked it.

But this I would not do.

Mr. Delafield had declared that the effect of my introduction to quite new circles would be imperceptible at first, but certain in the long-run.

I should change—change my wishes, change my views, change my character.

I did not want to do so.

I desired to be true to my better self.

It would have been mere hypocrisy to say, in my prayers, "Lead me not into temptation," and then walk straight into it, of my own accord, to see what would happen.

I told my mother, when the prospects of my marriage were a little more assured and satisfactory, I would, if she allowed me, come and stay with her for a time.

She actually answered that she wanted Alice May Rose near her—not Mrs. Welfare elect.

I knew she was only speaking bitterly from chagrin, and determined not to be offended. Whenever I could get her to drop me as a subject, I spoke about Emily.

How desolate and unfriended she really was ; what a misfortune she had gone through. This I had merely described as the death of her young lover by drowning. How her talents were withering through want of exercise. How calculated she was, by birth, appearance, and bearing, to shine in society. How certain she would be to take in London. I dwelt on her father's unfortunate marriage, and how it had a two-fold effect on my poor friend's future ; first, by depriving her of a home ; and, secondly, by increasing the distance between her and her aristocratical relations.

But of course I did not hint one word indicative of the scheme which had occurred to my brain. I merely left the facts about Emily to work on my mother's imagination, and to suggest anything they were calculated to suggest.

Before our trying confab was over, mother brought me the jewels I had given to her.

"I shall keep this ruby cross, Alice May," she said, "it belonged to the Rose family—had, indeed, been worn by Henry's mother; but you do not seem very proud of your father. I think I had better take care of it."

"Do not say that, dearest," I cried; "I cannot pretend to realise my relationship to Mr. Rose as I might have done under different circumstances. I have known his name only for two days. I shall grow to love him because he loved you. You would not like me better for acting sentiment."

She looked at me angrily for a moment, and I was sorry I had used the word "acting"; but she saw by my face that I meant nothing, and gradually grew gentle again.

"This sapphire ring," she exclaimed, "I will not wear. I cannot undo the past. I behaved badly. I acknowledge my fault; I have suffered enough, surely, to atone for it? I cannot always do penance for thoughtlessness. Why should I keep former days

before my eyes? Edward Traill was spared a great misfortune. He escaped marrying a woman who never loved him. He was your benefactor, Alice May. Wear his ring in remembrance of his kindness."

When Mr. Delafield came in, I slipped away, for I thought my mother would like to tell him what had taken place between us, or the results, at any rate.

About an hour before dinner, which I had promised to join, uncle was rung for; and on coming down, he told us the visitors would pursue their journey the next day, after breakfast. Then he had to arrange about getting the two pairs of horses from Daventry; but, as I have said, he had given the hint he should want them, and so now had only to intimate the time. Presently he called me aside.

"You are not going, then?" he asked.

"No, uncle," I answered, "not yet."

"Too pleased to have you, lass, but you must not let your love for us stand in the way of your prospects."

"I am certain I am doing right. And you will say so when you hear all about it."

He looked genuinely happy at the decision I had come to.

But he was otherwise rather put out, for George had suddenly left us. The Chaffinches were dreadfully in debt—I mean, of course, considering their circum-

stances, and they had not paid their rent for a long, long time, and it was known the bailiff was coming. And so old Chaffinch and Kate departed by night to look for the mother.

And such is love, that George, who was a widower, and had been a steady servant with my uncle for years, threw everything up, and went after Kate.

And his absence made us rather left-handed.

Mr. Delafield was very kind at dinner, but said no more about my going with them; and my mother, too was polite, yet I could tell her heart was, for the time at least, estranged.

My step-father only remarked, on wishing me good-night, that he hoped when they were settled I should be able to get away and pay them a visit.

But it was an indefinite invitation, without dates or details.

The next morning as I was dressing I heard the horses arrive in the stable-yard.

Taking it easy was the order of the day with the travellers. After breakfast they were to start. The Daventry horses would carry them a long stage to Towcester, and then fresh pairs would land them for luncheon at Stony Stratford, and in the afternoon they would proceed to Dunstable, and sleep there.

Next day there would only be about thirty-four miles left to London.

I breakfasted with my relations, but our intercourse was formal. My mother was quite composed ; and when she kissed me finally, she gave me an address, —promised to write, and begged that I would do so also.

My uncle closed the carriage door upon them, and then stood with my aunt at the entrance, bowing their acknowledgments.

I had run up to a window and waved my hand. The four horses went smartly off, and were turned in the direction of Braunston.

And then my heart utterly sank within me.

Had I taken a too serious responsibility upon myself?

The die was cast.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAST OF SISTER ANASTASIA.

I WALKED into the garden and passed into a remote part of it. I was depressed, and indeed alarmed, beyond measure.

Was it possible? Had the mystery of my life been solved? Was there anything more to know? Had I found my mother, and, in a certain sense, lost her again at once? Had the haunting secret, which, while it was in a way trying, was also enchanting, had it just swelled for a moment into a rounded and coloured reality, like a soap-bubble, and then, like it also, vanished into nothingness?

Another thought appalled me.

Supposing the difficulties about my property which Mr. Marlo had anticipated became insuperable? If a long prospect of legal proceedings opened before us, who was to find the money? How might they end after all?

What had I done?

Saddled myself on the poor dear Bostons, on whom I had no just claim?

Let go the affluence of my step-father, which had been actually laid at my feet?

There was Martin, of course, to support me. But how was marriage possible? Such a breach with his father, and no employment for himself?

What confusion had occurred!

How badly, in a worldly point of view, we had played our cards.

I found myself pacing up and down in complete agitation.

When at last I stood under the fruit trees, with my back to the inn, feeling more wretched than I ever remembered feeling before, I heard a voice say, "Alice!" and looking round I saw my uncle just behind me.

"Why, lass," he exclaimed, fixing his eyes on my face, "you are not yourself—what is the matter?"

"O uncle," I cried, "I am afraid that, with the best intentions, I have acted after all a selfish part."

"It is not like you," he remarked.

"I can tell you in two words what has happened; indeed, I have hinted to you before what was likely to occur. It has occurred. My step-father is desirous of adopting me; my mother would delight to have me with her, but they do not approve of my proposed marriage."

"They wish you to promise not to marry Martin?"

"Not exactly that. But they dislike the match, and they wanted me to go to London—in the hope, as I could plainly see—Mr. Delafield said as much—that a new life would have its effect on me, and render my present prospects distasteful."

"I do not believe you would forget Martin."

"No, I feel in my own heart quite certain I should not. But why run into temptation? And another thing, would not accepting their invitation have been a sort of deception? I should have been leading them to think I would give their view of things a trial. Please God, I never will!"

"I decide that you were quite right, lass, to stay on at the old *Pied Bull*. And since you have acted like a true-hearted girl, why be sad? If you have followed your conscience, you ought to be in good spirits. You have won a victory."

"But, uncle, think what I have done. I have refused a position for life, and thrown myself on you two dear people, as if I had any right to expect you to support me; for, uncle, I must tell you one thing."

I had intended to keep this matter to myself for a time, but I was never very strong about secrets.

"Mr. Marlo mentioned in the letter I had from him that he was afraid I should not get my property

without fighting for it. Not against young Traill so much as the Government. And you know what legal proceedings are—how they get drawn out—how, whatever happens, the expenses go on. I might find myself a pauper after all.”

“ Well, if there is nothing worse troubling you, you may cheer up. What was going to happen before you heard of your property? You were to live on with us, were you not? And I had arranged in my will that you and partner should have enough to keep you in decency, at any rate, and I have not altered my will.

“ Listen to me, Alice; you have been my niece many years. Now if these new folk have any difficulty as to whether they will have you for a daughter or not, be mine. I shall be proud of you, and you shall want for nothing, if I can help. So just dismiss all gloomy thoughts from your mind. You have been brought up in healthy, thrifty ways; you are strong, and have a heart to work, and what is money, after all, compared to suffice and contentment.

“ And look, too, at the bright points in your case. You were all in a tremble lest there should have been something shameful in your birth. You have turned out an honourable gentleman’s daughter, born from a wedded wife, and all is lofty and beautiful as can be. Is that nothing? ”

“How ungrateful I am to forget such a blessing!” I exclaimed, with sincere repentance.

“And then look at your mother. She has had a bad time of it. Not altogether her own fault, and as far as disrepute goes, not her fault at all. What has happened to her? She has found out that the only man she was really fond of was her lawful husband. And now, in her decline, a gentleman steps forward, closes his eyes to what happened in earlier years, gives her the shield of his good name, smooths her path before her, and treats her more like a sweetheart than anything else. Lastly, she has found that Alice Boston is her daughter, and that is the part of her luck I most envy her.”

I hung my head; I could only press the dear old man's hand.

It seemed better not to talk any more. But my uncle went on once again about Martin.

“Well, and then about your young fellow, Alice. He is in a little trouble with his father. But if old Welfare does not care about his assistance, there are others who would. I know one. And I think it something for you to have won an honest heart like his. There is not his equal on the countryside, and I can only give my opinion that you are worthy of each other.”

I had despaired too soon, and forgotten how many

things I had to be thankful for, and I could soon return to the house with my uncle, for he had put me all right again, and household duties seemed pleasant.

Another circumstance occurred which for a while drew me away from my own affairs.

I heard from Miss Savile. She told me that her sister, Mrs. Marlo, had been gradually recovering, and was so much better, she had written at length to her husband, though it seemed doubtful whether he would ever receive the communication. But a letter had recently arrived which had had a very bad effect upon her, and she had sunk into much such an apathy as had afflicted her before. She concealed this letter, however. But Evans, who had been called into consultation, thought it was very likely about Margaret, and might contain bad news. I had myself had what I called a little "Anastasia" note some days before. It contained only these words :

"Oui, je viens bientôt ! Amen.

Oui, Seigneur, Jésus ; viens."

"ANASTASIA."

But I was accustomed to her pious ejaculations, and did not attach any definite message to the expressions used.

Now, it occurred to me that she might have been on the sick bed when she wrote in such a manner. I carried Miss Savile's letter over to Emily, and she

quite took the view that poor Margaret was probably ill, and urged me to carry out a plan I had formed for going up to Bloomsbury, and setting inquiries on foot.

My uncle acquiesced, and I started for London the next day.

I found Mrs. Marlo entirely in the Deal condition. Health fair, but emotions quite numbed. I spoke of Margaret to her, and the name recalled the letter apparently at once, for she gave me the one she had previously concealed, and two others, unopened ; one received that very day. Miss Savile, though kind attention itself, had not had nerve enough to deal with these communications herself, without reference to her sister.

They were from Mother Mary Martha, the lady superioress of the convent where Margaret lived. She first announced that since the last summer Sister Anastasia had been in a very weak state, and that at the opening of March she had caught a bad cold, and feverish symptoms had developed themselves. She was, however, taken great care of, and had received the best medical advice available. The second letter gave the alarming news that Margaret had been attacked by bronchitis, and that the doctor was afraid that she was hardly strong enough to rally. He thought it advisable that her friends should come

down to see her, as her state was decidedly precarious.

The third letter announced her death.

It was the first intelligence of the poor girl's illness which had thrown Mrs. Marlo back into her extraordinary condition of calm heedlessness, and in this state the death could be communicated to her without fear of shock. She received at once the impression that there was to be a funeral ; but said to me that she hoped I would make all the arrangements for her.

Poor thing ! There was nothing to be managed except going down to witness the ceremony, and I thought we had better start the next day. I felt sure they would give ladies shelter in the convent.

I got my kind landlady at the *Rose* to engage a chaise for us, and the next day Mrs. Marlo and I went off, after breakfast. Miss Savile did not accompany us.

We drove through some pretty woodland country when we got quite away from London, and at length reached the South Downs, where, in a sheltered valley, just under the rising ground, we found the convent.

We were ushered into a bare but clean room, with a picture of the Madonna and Child on one side, and an ivory crucifix on a black ground facing it. We had sat a few minutes when a door opened, and a lady approaching sixty entered. She had a clever face,

and fine eyes, and at the instant, I own, I was very much struck, both in her features and in her voice, by a resemblance to the speech and face of Mr. Traill. I merely mention this as an impression. Whether she was Caroline Traill, the sister of whom the poor gentleman had spoken, or not, I cannot say. I did not know whether it would be right of me to ask, and indeed, coming as we did on such a mournful occasion, there was no opportunity for an enquiry of the kind. I told the lady superior that my companion was the mother of the late Sister Anastasia, and I suppose her silence was put down to grief. But I took the opportunity of being shown our rooms—which were immediately offered—to whisper to Mother Mary Martha what Mrs. Marlo's condition really was. She was very glad we had come, as she was anxious the funeral should be performed the next day. It was the rule of the order that the preparations should be of a simple character, and she was anxious that we should see the remains that night, that the coffin might be closed.

It was proposed that we should attend Benediction at five o'clock, and then be conducted to the mortuary chapel, where poor Margaret was lying. At the hour fixed we were shown into a small corridor, walled off by an elegant screen from the convent chapel. There was a stone balustrade perhaps four feet high, and then open stone lattice work through which we could

see without difficulty. At the ringing of the bell, the seats began to be filled with nuns, all in their long black habits and with black veils, the only white about them being the cloth round the face and chin, and what I should have called a white bib in front. They were Ursulines. As perpetual adoration of the sacrament was carried on, one nun was seen kneeling at the altar rails. Presently a trampling of feet was heard, and a bevy of nice children entered, for the institution was an educational one. The altar was soon lighted up, and an old priest entered, and the service began with the very sweet singing of a hymn, then a litany, certain prayers, another exquisite hymn, and finally the slow moving round of the sacrament in its silver frame. When the service was over we were conducted through the chapel to a small vaulted recess, hung with black and lighted with wax candles, and there in her coffin lay Margaret, a nun kneeling on either side of the bier, repeating prayers.

A crucifix lay on the breast of the body.

The features were quite those of Eugene.

Mrs. Marlo touched my arm, and whispered, "Yes, that is Margaret." It seemed strange to me, who had had a certain acquaintance with the poor deceased, that I should see her there for the first time. I could not afterwards say, "I had once met her in life" ; but I once met her in this way, in death.

Afterwards, the lady superioress told us that the expenses of the funeral were all paid by one Dr. Mackintosh, who had also supplied the funds when she first joined the society. He had intimated his intention of being present at the funeral.

And the next day he arrived, and came to see us in a small sitting apartment which had been assigned to us. He was between sixty and seventy, but was a wiry, active man, with a pink complexion, and a small white beard, neatly trimmed. He was friendly at once, and very talkative. And I soon learnt from his own lips that during a stay at Hampstead with some friends, Margaret had formed the acquaintance of Captain Mackintosh his son, who was home on furlough from India, and was staying with his father and mother, who then resided at that place. And an attachment had sprung up between the two. 'Angus had to go back,' the old doctor said, 'to his regiment without very definite hopes. For the poor girl's father had other views for her. I do not blame him, he knew his own wishes and plans. But the girl would marry Angus or no one. And I think, in time a union might have taken place. It was not to be, however, for poor Angus was killed in a conflict with a hill tribe in central India, his face to the foe. A soldier could not die better than that. But, oh! it was a heavy blow to Janet and me. We will carry the scars of that to

the grave. Well, then, when I found that the girl's father was bent on marrying her to a man she did not like, I just helped her into this place. I am no Catholic, but these women around us are good women, and the girl wished for it; her grandmother was Italian, and the thing was bred in her, more or less; and so I carried out the scheme for her. I think religion mostly geographical. I should be a Mahommedan in Arabia, though I do not know what Janet would say to the other three, for you may have four wives in that religion. But, however, such may not be your views."

"They are not," I said.

"Well, well," he continued, "we shall not quarrel; the freedom I ask for myself I give to others. If you are a Muggletonian, I shall not persecute you."

"I am not, however," I answered, laughing.

"And that is the mother?" he whispered; "she is very calm and silent."

I managed to get him to come out for a turn, and told him that Mrs. Marlo had lost her son by drowning, and what her condition had been on and off since.

He was interested, and told me the poor lady's state was not dangerous, but not certain to improve.

"And you are a niece, I think?" he asked.

I explained to him that Mr. Marlo was my lawyer,

and I told his mission to India, and as much as I thought would interest him.

“Well, I am sure,” he said at last, “I hope you will get your money in due time. The native governments are rather slippery, but an English lawyer may do much.”

He told me he had been twenty years in India, “and that,” he remarked jocosely, “is a long bout of manslaughter ; so now I do nothing ; and Janet and I live in Bond Street, and study London ; and she enjoys herself and I philosophise.”

He gave me his number and urged me to come and see him, and he would introduce me to Janet.

We attended the funeral together, and then parted.

The lady superioress was courteous and kind, but to this day I have no idea whether she was anything to Mr. Traill, though she certainly was like him.

CHAPTER III.

THE ELDER WELFARE IN TROUBLE.

THE very last day the hounds went out, Captain Meadows had rather a serious fall. He limped badly as he came in, and, indeed, had to be assisted on the stairs. The accident brought on gout, and he was quite confined to his room. Aunt and I tried to show him every attention. I occasionally went in to see if he had got everything comfortable. He said very little, but I think he liked to see us. "It's a bad business," he remarked, one morning, "when a fellow can't fall. He ought to leave off hunting, if he can't fall, and with me a fall brings on this abomination in my foot." As a return for my waiting on him he was very anxious I should see *Bell's Life*. "You will find some very interesting matter," he declared.

So I took it down, and, as it turned out, did find something to interest me, at any rate, for there was a great deal about a new character who had suddenly

appeared in betting circles, and who was alluded to as the "Black Prince." The details given of his origin were not correct, but such accounts seldom are in the newspapers at first. The true story works itself clear of a great amount of falsehood. He was represented as a man of colour—a planter, owning large estates in Central India, and looked upon with suspicion by the East India Company as a descendant, on his mother's side, of the Great Mogul. His resources were supposed to be fabulous, but it was shrewdly remarked that Aladdin's lamp itself would scarcely be able to keep a gentleman in funds who staked his money so wildly. His name, devoid of titles, was announced to be "Tyrell," but it was jocosely added that whether he was connected with the party who killed Rufus, or with the one who smothered the princes in the Tower, was not as yet discovered. There could be no doubt that this mysterious stranger was no other than Muzaffar Traill. He was said to have had some good luck, and to have landed several large sums, and encouraged by this, was very heavily engaged for the Derby.

Incredible as it may seem, I had, even since the adventure on the high road, had a long letter from this unfortunate creature.

I was quite determined to open any communication from him, on the chance of obtaining, from an

unguarded expression, any hint as to what really occurred at Deal.

I thought it best, however, as he might have written in some exasperation, to get my uncle to read the letter first, lest it should contain anything insulting. There was not the slightest allusion to what had occurred the night uncle and Joe Turnbull came to my rescue, and the contents were remarks on general topics, with a few items regarding the rent-free property. He mentioned that he had heard from Mr. Blott, who had reached Neendnuggur, the capital of the state where Mr. Traill, senior, was employed ; that the whole matter was before the native Council of Regency, and doubtless all disputes would be amicably settled, as, indeed, they always could have been, and could be, even now, without the interference of others. I should be glad to hear that he had been fortunate in betting, and hoped to win a large sum on the Derby ; and, in conclusion, he returned to a point he was never tired of dwelling on—that he only required to be known to be appreciated. To me, on the contrary, it seemed that the more one heard of the poor wretch the more he grew and increased in wickedness.

But it was evident that he wished bygones to be bygones, and to be considered on friendly terms with me and mine.

No notice, naturally, was taken of this epistle, which was written throughout in the curious English he affected.

One of the inconveniences of the old ship letter-post was that the deliveries were so irregular. Letters often did not arrive according to their dates. The vessels were subject to delays, and of two starting pretty well at the same time, one might come in some time before the other.

I had had a long letter from Neendnuggur, dated after Christmas, and in it were casual allusions to poor Eugene's death, and anxiety expressed about Mrs. Marlo's health ; but it was evident that the first acknowledgment of the sad news had not yet reached me. Mr. Marlo was, apparently, less anxious about my property. He considered that the claim advanced by Muzaffar portended no danger. It seemed to be well known in the place that Mr. Traill had made what he thought a suitable provision for his son, and never contemplated his succeeding to any part of his property. Muzaffar's mother's relatives were so far connected with Oude that they came from the city of Lucknow, and that lady herself, it was understood, had been hustled out of the place by jealous favourites, from apprehension of her influence with the highest personage in the state. But the family were musicians and dancers, and the education Mr.

Traill had given to Muzaffar and the provision he had arranged for him were by some put down to benevolence, and by others to folly and credulity. But the Government of India was represented at Neendnuggur by a political agent who was young and ambitious, and was desirous of putting the finances of the state on a better footing. Finance had always been the weak point of the late Raja's rule, and the money-lender was a more important person at court than was thought desirable. This agent could not directly interfere with the Council of Regency (Mr. Marlo called it the "Durbar"), but he could give advice, and did so in a very energetic way. One method of restoring prosperity to the Treasury was the resumption, wherever possible, of rent-free lands, by challenging and disallowing the grants.

The deed of gift by which I claimed succession to Mr. Traill's grant was a perfectly recognised method of conveying land; but the question, Mr. Marlo thought, would be whether any substantial injustice would be involved in the resumption of the estate once bestowed. The original reward was intended to recognise Mr. Traill's services, to enable him to retire in comfort, and to support him in his old age. But the present claimant was no relation—had not been brought up in expectation of the property, and had her own means of subsistence, and was in no way

connected with India. Poor Alice might be thus set down as an interloper. However, the Durbar had had many cases under their consideration, and were to send a report to the Governor-General as to how they proposed to deal with each, and the agent was to annex his remarks.

This individual Mr. Marlo stated to be hospitable and civil, but one who resolutely refused to hear or utter a single syllable about business. "Please put it in writing," was his constant remark, and from this rule he never deviated in any instance. He ridiculed Blott's position—said that he carried no weight whatever; and that Hur Sahai, seeing that Muzaffar's cause was not likely to succeed, had come over to his (Marlo's) side.

A day or two after I got this came the letter written when Mr. Marlo first heard of Eugene's death. It was a strange communication—very little expression of grief; whatever of tenderness there was turned on the point that it was an early age at which to die. But there was a dreadful suppressed rage and desire of vengeance which alarmed me. He made no accusations, but he gave out vague and gloomy announcements that the tables would be turned, and that he, Marlo, should not die till he had seen "his desire upon his enemies."

This scriptural phrase was the very expression he

used. He seemed touched with Mrs. Marlo's state and enjoined me to take every care of her.

May had now come round. I had constantly seen Emily, and we had often talked over the Delafields, and the wild ideas I had given vent to that night at Pie Court.

My mother had written to me in a friendly spirit, but not again urging me to pay a visit, always asking, however, how Miss Loftus was, and remarking how fortunate I had been to form such a desirable acquaintance. So that I cannot say that I felt astonished—excessively pleased, but not surprised—when, one May morning, a letter came from Mr. Delafield enclosing a note for Miss Loftus. The sheet meant for me stated in kind language that the writer and my mother had been remarkably struck with the appearance and manners of Miss Loftus; and as they had been able to secure a furnished house for the rest of the season, in Hill Street, Berkeley Square, they had sent her an invitation to visit them for a while, and they hoped I would present it, and back it up warmly and delicately.

“You, dear Alice, we shall be glad to have at a quieter time, at the sea, or in the country. And, indeed, Julia (who sends her best love) joins me in thinking that you yourself would sooner await the return of Mr. Martin Welfare, before closer connec-

tions were entered into with us. You will not misunderstand me (for I would say nothing unkind) if I reiterate that any sensible and amicable relinquishment by Mr. W. of claims which have wholly altered their character, would be the signal for renewed entreaties on our part that you should permanently take the place in my family which Julia's daughter has every right to occupy."

After reading this I was taken with laughter, and said out aloud, "O yes, I daresay. Anything else in which Mr. Welfare could oblige you? Julia's daughter will visit you as Mrs. Martin elect, or Mrs. Martin, or—not at all."

However, I had to go to Emily at once.

But horse-hoofs and a well-known voice announced that Joe Turnbull had arrived. He was serious and important, I found when I got below, and had been sent over on a curious errand. Old Mr. Welfare had been summoned to appear before the magistrates at Daventry. He had been before them once or twice already, but had got off with a reprimand or a small fine. This time, however, he had got into a more serious scrape. He was standing on rather high ground, and there was a thin hedge between him and a lane. Down this the rector was trotting on his pony, and Mr. Welfare, knowing that the steed was timid and the rider unskilful, fired a gun off, which

he held in his hand. The pony shied badly, and the rector went right over his head, and falling against a bank, broke his arm. For this performance the old farmer had got to answer the next day but one; and Joe had been dispatched to find out if Mr. Boston could appear for him as a witness to character. My uncle did not look as if he liked the job at all; but, however, he would not refuse, and told Joe if he would come over the morning the magistrates sat he would drive him to Daventry in the taxcart. So this was agreed upon.

"Guinea-pig is in a funk this time and no mistake," cried Joe, recovering from his gravity and laughing loudly. "By George, it was like fetching a crow down out of a tree. Pop goes guinea-pig, and parson drops off his pony exactly as if he had got a charge of swan-shot through his head."

"Upon my word," said my uncle, "the pitcher will go to the well once too often."

"He would have been up about the horse flesh," remarked Joe, "only I went to the rector and made matters smooth. Guinea-pig does not know that, or else I expect he would comb my wig for me. But this time the rector's lady was so savage about the broken arm, there was no getting an apology in any-how."

"A broken arm is too much for an apology," said

my uncle ; " you cannot disable a man for six weeks, and say, ' I beg your pardon.' "

" I expect it will be a case of guinea-pig and oakum," cried Joe, laughing.

" Let us hope not so bad as that," my uncle rejoined, " but he has had squeaks for it before this."

" I must go," I exclaimed ; " I have business down the village. Shall you be here, Joe, when I come back ? "

" Bless you, no, coz, thank you," he replied ; " old man's in a flurry ; it is ' Where's Joe ? Where's Joe ? ' from morning till night. I must be off."

" Then good-bye."

Naturally some excitement prevailed at Pie Court.

The invitation was read. It was in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Delafield—nicely worded—and the hope expressed at the end that, as it was a great favour to ask that Miss Loftus should travel up all the way from the country, she must kindly allow them to frank her to London and back.

" I should go," Miss Fosh said.

" I should go," I added, in support.

" You could go, Alice, and you will not," remarked Emily.

" I have not finished my sentence yet," I pleaded.
" —if I were you."

" Come into the garden, Alice, for a minute."

We went out, and when we got a little distance from the house, Emily said, with tears in her eyes, "You will not think badly of me? It is not too soon after poor Eugene's death?"

"No, dear, of course not. You must resume your old self. You have got your life before you."

"Yes," she murmured, "my life before me. I do long, I confess, to know something of the world. I have read and dreamed so much of it, and seen for myself so little. I have got to fight—and alone now—and I desire to see the battle-field. Well, then, I will go. I have hardly any dresses. I cannot help it. I must pull through as well as I can. I will write and accept the invitation. I saw your guardsman, Alice, riding by in a great hurry."

"Turnbull, you mean." And then I told her his errand.

Emily was very much amused.

"Really," she cried, "I hope Mr. Martin is not his father over again. He will be pushing you down a well or something."

"No," said I, remembering my uncle's eulogy, "he has got his father's honesty, but his mother's temper."

"Epitaphs are your strong point, you know, Alice."

"Now send and tell me what day and time you start, and uncle shall bring down the taxcart, and

land you and your luggage on the high road before the *Pied Bull*."

Uncle and Joe Turnbull went the second day to Daventry, old Mr. Welfare moving in the same direction by the Warwick road.

All was said for him that could be truthfully advanced. If he had pleaded Not Guilty, his lawyer might have dwelt on the possibility of the gun having gone off by mere accident. But the old man was rigidly veracious, and when asked if he had fired on purpose, replied, "Yes ;" and when further pressed to state why, said, "To frighten the parson's pony ; no man has a right to go along a public lane who rides so badly."

Against this self-condemnation, testimony that he was good to the poor and kind to his wife was of no avail. He was known to the Bench, and the magistrates gave him seven days without option of a fine, and he was carried off to Northampton gaol.

On coming back, Joe was very much upset. He had been closely examined as to the horse-flesh case, and when point-blank asked whether he had not apologised for his uncle to the rector's family, he was obliged to admit that he had done so.

He hurried off to Grandborough to allay Mrs. Welfare's distress, and to keep matters straight.

About ten days later, shortly after breakfast, we

heard a shrill piping, and looking out, saw Joe seated on his trunk, in a donkey cart led by a boy, and slowly advancing towards the *Bull*.

He had got out the flageolet, and was playing the then popular *Soldier's Tear* :

“ Upon the hill he turned
To take a last, fond look—”

He had got, as we learned, the “sack.” The old cripple had turned him out, neck and crop. I use his own words. The cause of his trouble being his acknowledged apologies to the parsonage.

My uncle insisted on his stopping with us till plans could be thought over.

CHAPTER IV.

A WELCOME RETURN.

I WAS easy about Martin. He had not failed to write and to keep me acquainted with his movements. He had spent very little money, for he had been most hospitably treated, and passed from farm to farm, so that he had had good opportunities for thoroughly inquiring into apparent prospects in the Canadian provinces, Upper and Lower Canada as the names then were. He had also heard many projects about the opening to the west, which was slowly forming into feasible undertakings. As he had mentioned before, he was going to stay with a friend at Prince Edward Island, to hear about the oats grown there with success, and what the climate was like, and then, by June, he hoped to be back.

What I heard from Mr. Marlo was more disturbing. The letter had come by a ship which had had a fast voyage, and brought news to the end of January. The writer did not say anything direct or definite

about my property, further than that the question of resumption or non-resumption was still under consideration. But he expressed himself very violently about the Government of India. It was, in his opinion, a very rascally one. By promoting officers who excelled in tyranny, the authorities directly encouraged falsehood, breach of faith, and disregard of contracts. There was a good deal on this head, but the gist of the communication was that, with the aid of Tippins and Hur Sahai, he—Marlo—was unravelling a curious crime he had long suspected. There was no question that the Neendnuggur Diamond, celebrated amongst native jewels as the Eye of Joy, had been stolen from the regalia. The care of this stone was intrusted to one man, and, indeed, the office was hereditary. As is commonly the case with such jewels, there was a very careful imitation which had been made of it, and the counterpart was mounted exactly like the original. And even on state occasions, it was understood that the Raja generally wore the counterpart, that the people might be gratified, and yet no risk run with such valuable property.

The keeper of the jewel, however, had unfortunately a wife who did not preserve the privacy of oriental women, but was a gambler and a profligate. And through this wretched creature, it appeared that

Muzaffar Traill had managed to learn where the Eye of Joy was kept, and, Marlo declared, had actually got hold of the diamond and made off with it to Europe. It came to the Raja's ears that something was wrong, and though he had not acceded to power, the Durbar, as his representatives, directed an experienced lapidary to examine the stone which was left, with the result that it was established to be only the imitation jewel.

Muzaffar had been living extravagantly at Neend-nuggur before his father's death, and gambling heavily, and there was no question he had disposed of the jewels given him by his father before he, Muzaffar, started for Europe. His having money at all in London, therefore, was suspicious.

The Durbar were anxious to conceal the robbery; they did not wish the people to know that this state possession, so prized, had been carelessly tended or fraudulently lost. But Hur Sahai had ferretted out all particulars and told Mr. Marlo, and the latter was determined that the matter should be made public. Preliminary steps towards concealment had been taken by the Durbar, ending in the disappearance of the keeper of the jewel and his wife. There were many rumours: the pair had been paid to fly, the pair had been buried alive, the pair had been strangled in jail—but discoverable they were not.

Mr. Marlo got the Agent to join him in pressing the Durbar to try and get hold of Muzaffar Traill, and they had consented to employ Hur Sahai to visit London and see what could be done. Tippins would be a material witness. He had evidence to give of a mysterious visit to Paris, followed by a great accession of wealth. He had taken private copies of compromising letters which had passed through his hands. Blott was in the secret, but it was thought possible would consent to go into the witness box.

For the present he had fled to Bombay, where it was understood he was stranded for funds.

Mr. Marlo ended with saying that the more formidable a person he appeared, the less opposition might be expected to my claim.

I put down just what he said without being able to decide on its correctness.

Marlo hoped to be in London by July.

Of course this letter was disturbing: it did not much relieve my anxieties about my money. But I tried to console myself in this way:

If everything came right, I should be very sorry to have worried unnecessarily; and if I was to have bad luck, it would be time enough to face it when it actually arrived.

I do not know that I should have been able to be

calm, even under these considerations, if I had not resolutely set myself to think of other things, and absorb myself in daily pursuits.

I add, without fear of ridicule, that part of my peace was due to horse exercise and cold-water bathing.

Emily had gone to Hill Street, and wrote me accounts of how kind the Delafields were to her, and that she had seen many of the sights, and attended concerts, theatres, etc. But that though her excellent hosts found people of some position who would dine with them, the gates of society, in its exclusive sense, were as yet quite closed against them. And Mr. Delafield was not only greatly annoyed but astonished; my mother, however, was scarcely surprised, and tried to brave the coldness as well as she could.

My feelings were exactly these :

I wished to love my mother, and I admired her. I liked Mr. Delafield. I was glad to have well-to-do relatives. But I was really not sorry to be out of London struggles after a position which would perhaps never be attained.

My uncle wrote a kind letter to Mr. Turnbull—Joe's father—explaining the position of affairs at Grandborough; detailing what had occurred and declaring that, in his opinion, Joe had behaved quite rightly, and had been unjustly dismissed.

He added that he sincerely hoped he would do well ; he was quite steady, and evidently possessed a kind disposition.

It was quite droll to witness Joe's efforts to be serious about his prospects.

Uncle thought he had better go home, as he might make himself useful to his father ; and so he had arranged to leave us.

The night before he went, he said to me :

"You have been very kind, Alice, and I should like you to think well of me. I am afraid I was too forward when I first came, but I have given no trouble, have I, since I knew you were Mrs. Martin?"

"That is rather anticipating," I interrupted, "but I must admit there has been a marked improvement in behaviour."

"It is all the same whether you are, or are only to be, Mrs. Martin ; in either case, Joe had no call to make himself agreeable. But because you have been kind, I want you to believe I can be serious."

I smiled doubtfully.

"No, no," he cried ; "do leave off and listen. What I mean is, that I am ready to work. You know I don't drink or anything like that, and I don't fear trouble. I can't think out things, certainly, and new plans do not occur to me, but I can do as I am bid,

which is something. I am, I believe, what is called 'able-bodied,' but I suppose my head is not so good. My ciphering is not first rate, but then I can be trusted with the till. I would sooner have anything in my hand, a waggoner's whip or a flail, for the matter of that, than a pen. As to being a scholar, I am not. Reading is not in my line. I could not, for the life of me, get through any big volume, like—what shall I say?—well, like 'Johnson's Dictionary.'"

"My dear Joe," I said, laughing, "nobody would read 'Johnson's Dictionary' through."

"I suppose they would not. O, hang it all, I cannot talk serious. Here goes."

And he whisked out his flageolet, and went off at score into "The British Grenadiers."

When I could get in a word, I remarked,—for I determined to try whether wounded vanity would develop any bad temper in him,—

"I would not overdo the music, Joe ; it might set some people against you."

"Might it, though?" he asked, with quite a surprised face ; "but really I do it for my own comfort. It is to me what smoking is to others."

"I did not say do not do your music, but only do not *over* do it. Watch people, and when they begin to make faces, and show marked signs of distress, pocket your pipe."

"Thanks for the hint," he rejoined, laughing, and without a sign of annoyance. "You are right, I expect. Even the dogs find some ballad tunes very trying, particularly the sentimental ones. There's a spaniel at Grandborough who always sits down to howl at 'On the Banks of Allan Water.' It touches up his nerves like a pencil drawn across a slate. I know what you mean about setting people against me. You are thinking of the old cripple. But, by George! Alice, he is a difficult man to get on with. He asks you a question, and, if you say No, you're a blockhead; and, if you say Yes, you're a sneak. He is awfully difficult."

"Of course he is difficult," I admitted. "Why, Martin cannot get on with him."

"And he is so obstinate," continued Joe; "he is just like a key in a hampered lock—he won't turn this way nor that way, and you cannot get him out of it, into the bargain. Well, it is very good of you to give me advice; there are not many who would take the trouble to do it. I shall turn over a new leaf, and be more careful about the music. Early in the morning, out in the fields. Would that do?"

"Nicely," I replied.

About the time Joe was starting for Staffordshire, we had another departure.

Captain Meadows was well enough to go up to

London, preparatory to his fishing expedition. He stayed, when in town, at the Opera Colonade Hotel. His seemed such a desolate life, I felt quite sorry for him. Apparently, he had no home, and no object in life, except to amuse himself, and that he did in such a lonely way that uncle said it was like driving to market always in a sulky. They are not often seen now, sulkies. It was a gig with one small seat between the wheels. Whether there was any reason for his isolation, a family quarrel or something of that sort, we never made out, and his manner did not encourage us to ask himself. He was so undemonstrative that he took no formal leave, just nodding and saying "Good morning," as if he was only going to Daventry. As a *souvenir* he extended to me the current *Bell's Life*. It was the number after the Derby, and I observed a short notice headed "The Rocket and the Stick," and it related that the brief career of the coloured gentleman called the "Black Prince" had come to an end. Encouraged by some successes on a large scale in the early part of the spring, he had speculated with a frenzied rashness on the Derby. The horse he backed so heavily had, to be sure, every chance of winning, and, had the weather suited him, would undoubtedly have done so. But it was very wet, and the favourite could not manage the exceptionally spongy ground, and his unfortunate fancier

came to trouble and, indeed, ruin. The writer remarked, with some want of originality, that the dark adventurer had gone up like a rocket and come down like the stick, and would be looked for, with considerable anxiety, on settling day.

The weeks passed without further letters ; and one morning, the sun shining into my bedroom, had awakened me, and on sitting up and looking at the watch I found it was four o'clock. Before returning to my bed for a little postscript of sleep, I threw open the window. The solemn, unwitnessed morning brooded over the garden, the thrushes were already singing, a scent of flowers arose, and the whole scene had a fresh and rested look that seemed to discourage further slumber.

The piping birds, it appeared to me, drew attention to the silence instead of breaking it, and in the hush I caught the trot of horses and the sound of wheels a long way off on the road in front ; and, presently, a horn. A coach horn on the dusty highway from Birmingham did not carry with it much that might not be fairly put down to prose ; but a horn, as I have remarked before, began the romance of my life, and there was something in the sound to me even—plain, sober Alice—that recalled the distant, slender blasts of Elfland, heard over long, silent landscapes in the night, of which fairy books had told us at Daventry years ago.

I slipped on a dressing-gown, and passed into one of the front rooms, and pulled up the blind. The coach stopped. I knew which one it was—the *Morning Star*, leaving Birmingham very late. None of our people were about ; but the guard put down some luggage on the roadside, and a man in a cap and caped coat turned towards the Inn.

I knocked frantically at a door not far off.

“Uncle, uncle ! Martin has returned !”

CHAPTER V.

A RETURN NOT SO PROPITIOUS.

MARTIN and I talked pretty well the whole forenoon ; in and out of the garden, along the road, down part of the village, in all sorts of places ; there seemed so much to communicate.

As soon as I knew about the Delafields, I had written off to him, and he had learned the whole story before he had left the St. Lawrence.

I could see he was very pleased I had not gone to London, and when I mentioned that Emily Loftus had left on a visit to my mother and her husband, I did not conceal from him that I had given every hint that she was much better suited to form one of their circle than I was.

I have said I kept down thoughts about my money troubles, by steadily engaging my attention to duties and occupations. And I tried to tire myself physically, so as not to lie awake at night. But now I felt I must tell Martin.

That was not a good riddle in the old books, "Why is sealing-wax like a woman?" the answer being, "Because she burns to keep a secret." But is this true? Does she? My experience is that she burns to divulge one.

I drew Martin gradually into a quiet part of the garden, close to the drying-ground. I anticipated a break down, and I did not want anyone to see it except Martin.

I do not pretend to say I was not very agitated. For I had been proud of my money: it had given me importance, and it was such a source of joy to me to hope that I might help Martin on in the world.

And what Mr. Marlo had written had alarmed me greatly. The prospect of law troubles was very annoying. I did not understand the thing clearly, but I supposed that if the native Council refused to recognise the transfer of the grant by deed of gift, that Mr. Marlo would have to bring a suit, on my behalf, against the members of the Council, to compel them to make over the property to me. For there was no question of the genuineness of my documents. But, from what I had heard of law, I associated it with long delays and provoking obstructions; and such difficulties, instead of the plain sailing I had expected, were a great disappointment. And I am

not ashamed of having had a good cry. Martin was very nice. He was quite touched with my sorrow. But, though he was very calm, and as consoling as he could be, I saw that he was taken aback and a good deal upset. I imagine he chiefly valued the money as likely to relieve him of his dependence on his father. However, he put the best face on matters. Thinking of England, he remarked that it was always a troublesome business transferring land, and perhaps there were doubts about the title which would have to be set at rest. But it would all come right, doubtless. And, should delay occur, yet he supposed the ultimate issue of the case was not doubtful, and money could be raised on such good prospects.

I wanted to tell Martin, too, of another sorrow of mine. It was this: that my refusal to stay in London, just at present, with my mother, seemed to have been taken by her and Mr. Delafield as an intended renunciation of the claims I might have as a daughter.

But this was a delicate point, for how could I avoid indicating that my proposed marriage was the obstacle in the way of amalgamation with my new-found relations.

However, I determined to do my best; so I said:

"I know, Martin, how pleased you will have been

to learn that everything about my birth was satisfactory. My father a kind and worthy gentleman, my mother lawfully married to him, and I not a waif with aliases, but Alice Rose, or to be very correct, Alice May Rose. If it was a pleasure to you, think what it must have been to me, after all my doubts and fears. But still, dear boy, I have been brought up at an inn, have grown to love farmers and their friends ; indeed, am proud of the order. And the open-air life, and the free, hearty intercourse that is not tightly tied by forms, have become so completely second nature to me, that I looked with distrust on what I should experience in London. Particularly when I saw that my mother's hope was that I should get gradually weaned from my former associations, and should come to have different views and wishes. But I know perfectly well that, in the process of attempting to change Alice of the Inn into Alice of the drawing-room, all the best parts of my character would be lost, and I thought you would not be angry at my hanging back."

"Angry, Alice? Why, you could not have paid your old life and your old friends a higher compliment."

"Yes ; but did I throw away advantages which might have been useful to you? Mr. Delafield is rich, but I cannot expect him to think of my wants

if I seem to show that I do not care very especially for his society."

"My own idea, is," said Martin, "that if they had got you up to London, and persuaded you to make a trial of their way of life, they would have brought every influence to bear on breaking off your marriage with me."

"They would, Martin. And if you can see that, you can see that I was right."

"Of course you were."

I was delighted that he could speak like this. It indicated an advanced stage of affection. In the old self-depreciating time, he would have thought he was standing in the way of my prosperity, and have moped himself into a sensitive melancholy.

I saw that nothing could separate us now. But as we went on to talk over the situation, it looked rather threatening. What would be his father's demeanour? Martin had been much shocked to think the old man had been actually in jail.

"I am very sorry and hurt," he remarked, "but really I can hardly wonder ; that unfortunate parson has been so persecuted that I think the magistrates were bound to do something decisive for his protection. My father will feel the degradation extremely, and it will have the effect, for a time at least, of keeping him quiet. But whether it will soften him is another question."

Uncle was delighted to have Martin back again, and was very much interested in his accounts of Canada, and of farming there, and the circumstances under which it was carried on ; and I must say our traveller told his stories very well. The trip had done him great good in manner, and to my thinking, at least, he had got rid of any prominent traces of the country-side.

Martin agreed he ought to go home at once ; his mother would be over-joyed to see him. I had, from time to time, sent messages by Joe Turnbull, saying Martin was all right, and would soon be back again. And the mother would tell in what disposition old Mr. Welfare was, and whether advances were advisable. At the same time, my uncle insisted that he was to return to the *Bull* at once, if there were any difficulties, and stay with us till future plans could be thought over.

So the next morning Martin rode over to Grandborough on uncle's mare ; and he was to send her back if he was favourably received and asked to stay. In that case we were to send his things, and he would come and see us, and tell us what his father had said, and on what agreement they could live together in future.

We sincerely hoped Martin would not come back, and as the afternoon wore on I said to aunt, "I think we need not expect him now."

But alas ! when we were just sitting down to tea, I heard the mare ridden down the yard, and presently Martin came in. It was all wretched.

There was no difficulty about seeing his mother; the old man never prevented anyone going up whom she wished to see. But he would not show himself. He was brooding over his imprisonment, over Joe's misbehaviour (as he deemed it) and his loss. And as he would not open Martin's letter from Canada, he had never received his overtures. He had an oddly constituted mind. He did not seem to think that there was any loss of character in all the shameful tricks he played the poor rector. He was carrying on what he strove to consider a holy war, and such matters were allowable in a struggle. I suppose he would not have taken offence at reprisals. But he would certainly have revenged them. And yet with these base notions of what his own self-respect demanded, he was fearfully humiliated by the sentence the magistrates had passed. The order for retention exempted from hard labour. But still to be taken away in charge of the constables—to have to enter the gloomy jail—be handled by the turnkeys and locked up—these things were gall and bitterness to his soul. And Mrs. Welfare said that since her husband had come back he had hardly attended to business of any kind, but had sat by himself, silent and grim. He

ate hardly anything, and the maid and the labourers were afraid to speak to him. As he did not come out into the parlour, but took what he wanted in a little office room, not suffering any cloth to be laid, or the crockery to be put in usual form, the mother wanted Martin to have *his* meal comfortably in the parlour, —a good big place. But Martin thought it would vex the old fellow, who might be excused for being a little irritable; and so, very nicely, he (Martin) cut himself a sandwich in the kitchen, and would not sit down at all.

And his mother told him that just at present she did not think it would be possible to soften the old man, but that he might come round of himself if left alone. What she feared was that in his annoyance and exasperation he might give up the horse business altogether, and reduce everything to a farm.

Martin was very put out, but it happened the next morning that a proposal came to him which, just as a temporary measure, we all agreed would be a wise thing to accept. Breathing time would thus be secured. The railway was rapidly advancing, and the old whips began to see that their occupation, as far as the Birmingham road was concerned, was slipping from them. There was naturally a feeling that something must be done. Some proposed to take inns; some to go into farming or even market-gardening.

And in this way, one of the coach proprietors in Birmingham was short of a hand and wrote to Martin to ask if he would drive a coach called *The Eclipse Tally-Ho*, which he was desirous to keep on the road as long as it paid.

Of course, Martin hardly dared to look at the Rugby *Royal George*, on account of his father. So it ended in this offer being closed with. And Martin drove this coach for a few weeks. It was white picked out with red, and rather a showy vehicle ; and had a sun in the back panel partially obscured, with a fox underneath. I do not know what poor Eugene would have said to the art.

Martin drove up to London one day, and down the next. It was hard, anxious work, but some of the drivers of the time went through great exertions. Phil Carter, whom Martin knew, drove a coach from Oxford to London and back daily. The *Eclipse Tally-Ho* passed up about eleven, and down at half-past three, but it did not stop. I used to hang a blue veil in one of the front windows, when the coach was coming, by way of salute. I was afraid of the passengers, but sometimes ventured to the door and waved my hand.

Uncle, always thinking of kind things, drove me out to Dunchurch on one or two afternoons, where the *Eclipse* changed horses, to have a few words with

Martin as he passed through on his way to Birmingham. Emily stayed on with the Delafields, and sent Miss Fosh very amusing sketches of London life—such life, at least, as her hosts commanded—to be shown to me. It seemed likely that she would not come home till the season, which was a very late one, had ended. So matters stood in July, when one morning a letter came from Miss Savile, saying that the agents had informed Mrs. Marlo that the *John Malcolm*, with Mr. Marlo on board, was expected at Sheerness in a couple of days. He would probably land at Dover, and might be in Bloomsbury at any time. Miss Savile was a little nervous as to how she should be received, but she could scarcely leave her sister; for Mrs. Marlo, though not suffering, was still very indifferent, and exhibited every symptom of some unnatural interference with the operations of the mind. The next day came a few lines to intimate that Mr. Marlo had arrived—seemed in fair health—and had been civil to Miss Savile, saying he was much obliged for her care of his wife, and hoped she would stay on, as Mrs. Marlo, he could see at a glance, was quite unable to look after herself. He had had to be told about Margaret, but he received the intelligence very calmly.

I naturally felt sure that Mr. Marlo would write to me himself, and give an account of what had occurred ;

but on the contrary, he took no notice, and after four or five days had passed, I consulted uncle, and he quite agreed that I ought to go to London and see my lawyer, and find out how matters stood. This was carried out. Uncle was kind enough to offer to accompany me. We went by Martin's coach, so that I had ample opportunity of explaining to him what was happening. Uncle and I put up as usual at the *Rose*, and called the same evening in Bloomsbury, but found Mr. Marlo out. But the two ladies were in, and learning that the lawyer was not likely to be home till late, eleven the next morning was fixed for an interview.

Uncle thought, as he had never been on very good terms with Marlo, that I had better go by myself, and so accordingly I found my solitary way to Charlotte Street at the time appointed. I was shown into the well-remembered room where the will had been read, and young Mr. Ellis so badgered. I shall never forget the interview that followed. If I had not been in good health and unaccustomed to think of my nerves, I really believe I should have fainted. As it was, I grew hot and cold by turns, and my pulse beat so, anyone might have seen my wrists throbbing. Not one word of greeting or inquiry how I had been. Not even an invitation to sit down. I took a chair, however, and drew it to the table. Mr. Marlo had not

even risen to receive me, but stared with a black frown on his forehead, as if he wished to turn me to stone. His first sentence was, " Evil indeed was that hour in which I ever saw your face ! "

And then he rushed onward, without pausing for an instant, into a long and vehement denunciation, pronounced with flashing eyes and the utmost volubility.

He attacked the Indian Government ; he attacked native states in general, and Neendnuggur in particular—the Durbar, the British agent ; he attacked the memory of Mr. Traill, and reiterated charges, which he had long ago pronounced absolutely groundless, against my uncle and aunt and even myself, of cajolery and flattery towards a dying man. Then he turned on Muzaffar Traill, and with his extraordinary flow of words held him up to execration as a robber and a swindler—faithless alike to the Raja and his own father, and without a single spark of either honour or shame. He accused him of the murders of both Eugene and Margaret, attributing the death of the latter to grief at the loss of her brother.

He described himself as baffled, cheated, deceived, ruined by a scoundrelly Government ; as bereft of his children—worse than bereft of his wife—and finally as coming home to find matters in utter confusion, and the arch-villain of his day, the anointed head

of pickpockets, the crawling creature—Dunstable—in a firm position of sanctimonious usurpation, from whence he could only be dislodged by the destruction of the establishment which had nourished the vile birth, and by the effacement of the skill, industry and respectability of a hundred years! He turned on me once more and said I owed him hundreds of pounds, and that I should not be set free till I had paid the uttermost fathing.

I felt I should be less likely to burst out crying or feel faint if I defended myself and spoke out, and so I interrupted him and told him, as loudly as I could, that if he had spent more than had been agreed upon, I should only wish to see an account, and if all seemed fair and right, he should be reimbursed out of my money.

“Your money!”—he actually screamed—“Your money! And be good enough to say where your money is to be heard of. Defrauded by a paternal Government, bamboozled by a benevolent autocracy, you may whistle, I can tell you, for what you are confiding enough to call your money!”

And then collecting himself for a more definite and malignant declaration of future vengeance, and speaking in a thick, discordant voice, he added :

“But they shall see Salvator Marlo in his might. I will drag the blood-stained Muzaffar to the bar

of justice : he shall forfeit his life for his crimes. The tyranny in India shall hear the tocsin calling to liberty, the tocsin rousing to reprisals—not only in that distant, rifled and forgotten Empire, but in the Parliament House of this country, in the market-place of every provincial town throughout the length and breadth of the land. The public conscience rising up towards heaven like a flame shall consume that ancient throne usurped by a parcel of shopkeepers, who display more cruelty and less honour than their predecessors. I will transport Dunstable and dissipate his ill-gotten gains. I will nail the name of every knave who has opposed me to the gibbet—take it down, who dare or can !”

For one instant I saw in his eyes a light I had never witnessed before, and I did not know yet what that glare intimated. Then he covered his brow with his hands, as if in intense pain, and, uttering a low moaning sound of agony, he rushed from the room. Frightened out of my senses almost, I managed to get down to the front door and into the street ; and so took the way, hurrying rapidly along, to the *Rose* in Cobb’s Alley, Holborn.

I was obliged to lie down on the sofa as soon as I got in, and was so upset that uncle was alarmed and called the landlady. She, good soul, promptly attended—rubbed my hands and proposed brandy-

and-water. But I had a particular dislike to being thought unable to pull through a little struggle without stimulant, and would not take it. And by lying quite still and rubbing my forehead with Eau-de-Cologne, I got calm; and then when, in due course, the mid-day meal arrived, I was very glad of it.

And afterwards, I told my uncle everything. He was very angry and quite prepared to go down to Bloomsbury and have it out with Mr. Marlo. But, in every way, this seemed undesirable, and as an alternative, I proposed that I should consult my step-father. He would, perhaps, I thought, carry more weight; and being in London could follow the business up to the end, if he was good enough to take it in hand. Moreover, he was in full command of his temper, which uncle really was not, especially when he suspected that either himself or any of his were being put upon.

I could see that my proposal was not at all unwelcome to my uncle, and he urged that there should be as little delay as possible. I remembered that Emily had mentioned that dinner was at seven, and I decided to go that evening at eight, on the chance that they were not going to the theatre or leaving home on any other account.

"If you have a cab, you can go very well alone," uncle said.

So at the time arranged I went to Hill Street. I was very simply dressed, and when I told the footman, who answered the bell, that I wished to speak to Mrs. Delafield, he rather demurred—said it was late, and asked if I could not leave a message. I told him the matter was urgent, and begged him merely to state that Miss Boston was present.

He requested me to wait in the hall.

It struck me when I was by myself what a strange position I was in. Here was the daughter standing, a kind of suppliant, at the mother's door. The ladies had just gone to the drawing-room, and the voice I heard, rich and full, was the voice of a friend I had always loved, but always also, in some sense, regarded as the inhabitant of another planet. She was now my mother's guest. Emily told me afterwards that the servant said, when he approached Mrs. Delafield, "A young person downstairs wishes to speak with you, madam." The name being asked, he added Boston, and my mother ordered lights in her boudoir, and directed that I should be shown up. Mr. Delafield, however, was just leaving the dining-room with two gentlemen, and seeing me, gave a cry of surprise, and kindly came forward to take me upstairs on his arm. The servant said Mrs. Delafield was in the boudoir and thither I was conducted.

The three or four guests were musical people, and
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Mr. Delafield said he would just set them going, and return to us.

My mother was quite affectionate ; a little patronizing ; but that I expected, and did not mind, and I was placed on a settee close to her own chair. I told her that I had come up to town to meet my lawyer, and I wanted advice from my step-father as to how I ought to act in what seemed to me an emergency.

My mother said she was sure he would gladly aid, and that he would be back directly.

"And so your friend has come home from Canada?" she remarked ; "and how are matters going on? When he heard you had found your mother, and who you were, did he not say he would allow you to reconsider your promise?"

It showed how this subject was nearest to her heart, that she should speak of it the first thing.

"No, dearest mother," I answered, "he would not be at all likely to talk in a way so certain to wound my feelings."

"But still, circumstances *are* entirely changed since he proposed, are they not?"

"I know who my father was ; I have recovered my mother ; but I have not forgotten my past or changed my affections."

"Dear Alice May!" my mother exclaimed, and her

eyes were really brimmed with tears, "do believe me, that this unfortunate project of yours is the *only* obstacle to a complete union between us. You say yourself that you are of the inn and the farm, and that such associations have become to you second nature. We do not mind predilections. Leave your second nature to us, and we will engage to give you gradually new tastes and new views of things, and you shall be the daughter of the house, and all will be bright and hopeful."

To make a diversion, I asked how she liked Emily.

"Perfectly delightful. We adore her; and, notwithstanding all the injustice you do yourself, Alice May, there must be something elevated in you to have attracted the friendship of such a girl."

"We were thrown together. It was mostly accident that led to our intimacy."

Mr. Delafield returned at this point, and, catching the subject, he, too, praised Emily very highly; but my mother said she must attend to her guests, and rose to join them.

As she passed me, she whispered, "Be true to yourself."

I inwardly responded, "Please God, I will."

When we were alone, I explained to Mr. Delafield, as well as I could, what had brought me to town: my interview with my lawyer, the extraordinary

excitement under which I found him labouring, and the gloomy prospects which his violent language seemed to intimate were spreading before me in the future. My step-father was very kind, and listened attentively to all I had to say.

"As far as I apprehend the matter," he remarked, "things do look rather awkward; but from your account the lawyer was not in command of temper or common sense, and may have exaggerated." I had softened Mr. Marlo's great rudeness, and dwelt chiefly on the vehemence with which he had expressed himself.

"I suppose you would like me to see this Mr. Marlo, now, would you not? I do not mind the trouble at all, and I daresay that, in his intercourse with me, the man will be more coherent and practical."

This was really exactly what I did want, and I cordially accepted the proposal, and expressed my sincere thanks.

For Eugene's and for Margaret's sake, however, I desired to say a word for Mr. Marlo; and I explained that the voyage was undertaken from the best motives, but that family afflictions of quite an unusual kind had occurred during the lawyer's absence which were well calculated to disturb a mind even of a calm and unemotional character;

and that to a man like him, understood to be of southern origin, and naturally excitable and impassioned, what had happened must have been quite exceptionably trying.

Mr. Delafield took the address in Charlotte Street, and promised to call the next day, and investigate for himself the exact state of the case.

"I will make every allowance for his misfortunes," he promised; "but, in the meantime, there is no occasion for you to lose heart. All may come right in the end; and, in sober truth, it does not much matter about your private property. You have only to hold up your hand, and we will most gladly receive you, and you need go away no more."

I smiled, but shook my head.

"Well, come in now, at any rate, and have some music," he urged.

"I think I will not, please; because my dress is unsuitable."

"We do not mind, if you do not."

"I do mind a little. You are very kind. You will not misunderstand me?"

"No, no; do as you like. But listen. Come to dinner to-morrow, at seven; and then I will tell you all I have heard."

"To speak truth," I answered, "uncle has come up with me."

"Uncle! Who is uncle?"

"Well, Mr. Boston has been good enough to accompany me to town, and I do not like to leave him in the evening. Here is a proposition, if pleasant to you and mother: I will come to breakfast the day after to-morrow."

"Very well, come away; nine o'clock."

"Will you have a carriage back? It can be ready directly."

"Oh, no; I would not give you trouble. It will be quite enough if you will allow one of the servants to call a cab."

The order was given.

Mr. Delafield took me on his arm down into the passage; but seeing that Emily had slipped out of the drawing-room to speak to me for a moment, he wished me good-night, passed upstairs again, and left us.

We had hardly time for more than a few hurried words; but I told my dear old friend, who looked very well in a black, low dress, that I was coming to breakfast the next day but one, and she answered, "The hour is nine, but come at eight. I will be quite ready, and we will walk together in the Parks."

I was delighted to agree.

Just as the cab turned into Bond Street a man stopped it under a lamp-post.

Good uncle had walked down to see me safe in the *Rose*.

CHAPTER VI.

FAIRY MONEY.

AT eight o'clock I was in Hill Street.

And Emily was up and dressed, and quite ready to go out. Dearly as I love the country, I must say London is exceedingly beautiful on a summer morning. We walked in the Green Park, and found our way down to the water in St. James' Park. Of course I was agitated and uneasy. The news about my money was terribly distressing ; but when Emily had heard a full account of my interview with Mr. Marlo, she said, "I do not think you need be out of spirits. Nothing is clear yet. Mr. Marlo seems to have got absorbed in the desire of exposing the young Traill, and getting a case up against him ; and he may have mismanaged the prosecution of your claim. But I cannot believe it is too late. Justice is on your side. Mr. Traill obtained the grant in perpetuity,—had the right to transfer it,—and did so, when he was perfectly in possession of his faculties, and without solicitation."

Emily always understood business matters, though she could have had no practice much.

But she was ready at acquiring anything.

I used to wonder why she was able to ride. Her father had written some articles for a dictionary of reference when she was about twelve years old ; and she had a pony for a season or two.

From that time forth she did not care what she mounted.

I was very anxious to know if there had been the least indication of the wild idea I had propounded coming true.

But Emily said, " The Delafields have said nothing, except that I must promise to visit them again. Your mother is very fond of you, Alice, in her way. She cannot indeed understand why you do not jump at the proposal that you should live with them. She has always been admired, and it seems strange to her now that she should have to solicit affection, and hand her motherhood to you on a tray. She sees that the real cause is the Martin business, but she *will* try to look upon that as an ephemeral affair. And she actually said to me yesterday, when talking of the errand Mr. Delafield had gone to Bloomsbury about, " I wish Alice May could lose her money ; I expect that young fellow at Caldicote would soon disappear. Of course, he is after the property."

"You know, Emily," I exclaimed, "whether that is true or not."

"I know, positively, it is not true. I am only telling you what your mother thinks. She has been very cordial and nice to me, and I am afraid I have not repaid her ; for she was very anxious I should look up Lord Steepleton, in the hope he would call, when he knew I was so warmly welcomed a guest in Hill Street. And I went to Portman Square to look my Lord and Lady up. He was civil but distant. She was very stuffy.

"‘Your father,’ she remarked, ‘is a great credit to his family.’ She meant about the marriage ; but I chose to take it in another way.

"‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘he is famous as a scholar. People of birth are seldom distinguished on their merits ; fortune can do for them at a stroke what talent takes years to achieve.’ This did not improve matters. However, I was asked another day to lunch ; but they would not take any interest in the Delafields, and evidently never dreamt of calling. I think I might have been of use to my hosts if I had begun at the very commencement of the season. At this time many are panting to be off, and some have gone."

It occurred to me to repeat to Emily what I had read in *Bell's Life*, about the Black Prince,—but she

made a gesture of closing her ears, and said, "No Alice, you must tell me nothing; his very name rouses vindictiveness, and that is bad form, and of no service to anyone."

Breakfast was on the table when we got back, and my mother came in, looking very nice, effectively but not simply dressed. She did not mind deserting the fashion if she thought any particular article of costume suited her. I fancied I observed that the waiting on me was elaborate; to make up, perhaps, for the "young person" of the previous visit. Everything around was affluent and in a style quite new to me. After breakfast, Mr. Delafield asked me into the library. He looked rather grave, but spoke with a cheerfulness which struck me as a little forced.

He told me that, from my description, he had expected to find Mr. Marlo in an excited state, and was agreeably surprised when my lawyer, in a calm and reasonable manner, detailed the facts of the case with great calmness.

"Before I came away, however, Alice May," Mr. Delafield, said, "I had a taste of what you had gone through, and I saw that you had not exaggerated. He got on some young man,—a son, I understood, of your benefactor,—and he was most violent and intemperate,—so that I was glad to get away.

"Now, about your money.

“ The case appears to be this : As a reward for Mr. Traill’s services, the late Raja left special directions that a grant of rent-free land, affording an income of £500 or £600 a year in the best seasons, and a good deal less, perhaps, in moderate or unfavourable ones, should be conferred on his old friend.

“ The grant was in perpetuity ; no conditions being mentioned about heirs. Such a grant, it seems, is transferable, and the deed of gift, though not a Hindoo instrument, is generally recognised.

“ There has been, however, in the Company’s territories, an attempt of late years to remedy the alienation of Crown lands. You can understand that in those parts the King or Government is landlord. Therefore, to give a grant is to lessen the revenues of the country. The Company has been looking over these grants, and resuming many of them. And the idea has spread among native states. A certain Captain Holdfast is Company’s agent at this Neend-nuggur, and he has instilled into the native Council, who are acting as regents for the young Raja, a notion that the whole duty of a statesman consists in putting the finances into good order. Especially has he enjoined on them the necessity of scrutinising grants of rent—free land. The Council is nominally independent, but submits any new or trenchant policy to the Company’s government ; and has recently

forwarded a report on these grants. Previously to drawing it up, they had examined claims put forward by a natural son of Mr. Traill, and by Marlo, on your behalf. This report has now been sanctioned by the Company's government, and one of the proposed arrangements is understood to be the resumption of the grant which Mr. Traill transferred to you.

"The argument is that, though the grant was in perpetuity, it was only intended to be a perpetual support to the family of a deserving servant. If it is not wanted for that purpose it lapses of itself. The Council recognises that the transfer to you was executed by Traill, in full possession of his faculties, and without undue influence of any sort ; but, in their opinion, Traill mistook the object and nature of the grant. The decision was not actually published when Marlo left Neendnuggur, but its purport had leaked out. Captain Holdfast was from first to last in favour of resumption. The claim of the natural son was considered altogether untenable. Now, the difficulty is to know what to do. To appeal? But to whom? No action will lie in our courts against the Neendnuggur state. And what chance has a reference to the Company's government as suzerain? The Company has already pronounced approval of the Council's proposals, and would doubtless urge that they have no jurisdiction. However, I will go to the

India House, and make every inquiry, and do my best for you."

I was extremely obliged by his kindness, but, I said, "I must ask one favour. Would you put down in writing what you have just told me?" He laughed, and answered, "My dear girl, I thought you would break down in remembering all of it, and I have anticipated your wish. Last night, before I went to bed, I put the matter in black and white; and here it is." He turned to a drawer, and got out a paper, and it is from that paper I have copied down what has just been written.

"Oh, thank you," I exclaimed; "now uncle and I can puzzle over the thing, and get to understand it."

"Uncle again!" said Mr. Delafield shaking his finger. "Oh, Alice May!" and he spoke quite fervently. "I really think this misfortune (for I cannot conceal from you that the case seems to me a bad one) is quite providential. I do not blame you for falling in love; I understand your desire to avoid anything like jilting; indeed, I respect your fidelity; but for the young man's sake, pause before you act rashly. He, from what you say, has no permanent employment, is on bad terms with his father, and still quite young. You will swamp him if you insist on his keeping to his contract. He can scarcely find bread for himself; what is he to do with

a penniless wife? I do not say it is certain you have no money ; but, upon my word, I think it very likely. Is it kind of you,—I am not talking about us,—but about the young man,—to be so rigid in demanding fulfilment of a promise? He may feel chagrined for the time at losing you ; but, believe me, he will be much more chagrined in the end by gaining you. You cannot expect your mother to support you if you act in direct opposition to her wishes. Go back to Caldicote, break off the match as considerately as you can, return to us, and your fortune is made.”

What Mr. Delafield had said hurt me worse than anything that had happened. Could it be true? Would my marriage, which for months I had thought would be the making of Martin, really prove a bane to him?

Mr. Delafield saw that I was dreadfully upset.

“ My poor girl,” he cried, putting his arm gently round me, “ I declare to you I feel your difficulties and sufferings very much. Don’t cry ; things will mend. What would you like to do now? Shall I ask Miss Loftus to come and sit with you?”

“ No,” I answered, “ dear Mr. Delafield. I could not see anyone just now. Please have a cab called for me. I will go to Mr. Boston. I think I must return to Caldicote, for a time at least. Would you most kindly write to me when you have been to the

India House? Please give my best love to my mother and Emily. I cannot trust myself to stay."

Mr. Delafield understood me. He ordered the cab, and himself took me to the front door, and saw me off with every kind attention.

At five that afternoon I was lying on a sofa at the *Rose*. Uncle was in the room, and the landlady, who had just brought in tea, joined him in cheering me by kind talk. The tea proved refreshing and consoling.

"Uncle," I said, "I am quite ready to travel by a night coach, if it would not fatigue you."

"Bless you, no, it will not fatigue *me*," he responded, brightly.

"I do so wish to be at home."

"I love to hear you call the old *Pied Bull* by that name. Come along, I am your man."

And that night we started for Caldicote again.

I do not pretend to say that I was not fearfully disappointed about the money.

True, a short time back—a little over a year back—I had no expectations at all. Nor had I been brought up to suppose I should ever have an independence of any kind.

Still, for many months I had enjoyed the reputation and the pleasant feeling of being, amongst my own farmer class, an heiress.

This was a source of pride.

But I can honestly declare, far above any personal sense of importance was the belief that I could largely contribute to Martin's happiness.

I quite understood business well enough to know, that if my yearly payments were secured I could easily raise money on them, to supply capital for the horse-breeding establishment planned by old Mr. Welfare.

And I was sure that when Martin's annoyance at his father's officious interference had quite disappeared, and peace was restored between them, our marriage would be a source of joy to the old man, his wife, my uncle and aunt, and ourselves. All these dreams seemed about to vanish—perhaps had vanished—finally.

I was most likely a penniless girl again, living on people who were no relation to me, and my union with Martin, whenever it took place, would be an anxiety as regarded ways and means, a responsibility, and a hazard.

And quite decidedly I should be unwelcome to old Mr. Welfare. I had found my mother ; a home was offered me—fortune, prospects, a higher grade in society—these things were dangled before me as prizes within easy reach. An avaricious grasp, and they were mine. But at what a price !

At the price of Martin's happiness and of my own self-respect through life.

It was Saturday morning when we reached Caldicote, and Martin was to drive the *Eclipse Tally-ho* to Birmingham and would pass in the afternoon. So uncle kindly offered to go over to Dunchurch to see him, whilst horses were being changed, and get him to spend Sunday with us. Birmingham was a little better than thirty miles off, and if he came by an early night coach, he would be with us between eleven and twelve.

I did not want to look mopish and woe-begone when Martin arrived ; so I had my grey saddled in the afternoon for a gallop. He had not been out for some days—tried to get rid of me at starting, and then bolted. However, I managed to turn him into a country lane and let him go, and then he soon wanted to stop, but it was my turn now, and I would not let him.

“Poor chap,” I thought as I went along, “you have got a beggar on your back, who hopes, indeed, not to ride you to the proverbial place where mounted beggars go, but will, alas ! have to dispose of you, and let you go there by yourself.”

This gallop and a tub made a new Alice of me, and my spirits rose again with the feeling of renovation.

Soon after eleven Martin arrived. He had scarcely had time to get anything to eat, and was very glad of the supper which aunt and I had prepared for him.

She and uncle slipped away, and when Martin had got to his cigar I sat by him and told him everything.

He was very good, and took things exactly as I wished he would take them.

Being quite a natural man, without any idea of posing for what he was not, he said at once that it was a terrible blow—the prospect of my losing my money—because it threw him so much into the power of his father.

“My father,” he went on, “is not nearly so bad as he seems.”

“I am certain he is not. From my interview with him I can testify to some very good traits in his character.”

“Exactly,” said Martin, “but then his brooding is a kind of suicide. He shuts himself out from all good influences, and welcomes the evil spirit as if it were a nice thing to have about you.”

“A mere accident might bring him to his right mind.”

“Yes, it might. But then, waiting for accidents is rather weary work, is it not?”

We neither of us spoke for a minute or two, and then Martin remarked :

“But there is a bright side to most things that happen to people. And when one gets over the disappointment—and time is a rare hand at helping in that

respect—just think how the loss restores our love to a high position. No one will be able to say that Martin married for money now ; and when they see us struggling along together and braving difficulties on small means, they must admit that ours was a love match and no mistake.”

I drank in these words, and felt strong and determined after hearing them ; and Martin, seeing how gratified I was, said other things like them.

The tone he had taken was one which pleased me most completely, and gave me entire satisfaction.

In the first place, he looked on the possible loss of the money as his misfortune quite as much as mine.

Then he showed that he did not consider the circumstance to alter our position to each other at all. He spoke of our marriage merely as taking place under different conditions. Lastly, I loved what he said about our fighting side by side.

There was no allusion to my new relatives—no hesitation—no doubt—no humility—no despondency.

He had won me, and he meant to keep me, come what might. It was perhaps rather presumptuous, but I could not help thinking, “ What cannot a man’s love for a woman do for himself ? ” Such a fellow was worth going through anything for. And I satisfied myself that in gaining the devotion of an honest,

unselfish, simple English heart, I had really, like a far better woman, chosen the better part.

Thank God for the mood I fell asleep in that night. The sky was clear, the window partially open ; garden sweetness wandered in. The moonlight was strong, and the shadows of the fruit-trees trembled on the paper of the wall. I fell off, but awoke soon after with that strange feeling that one had almost surprised presences.

Had the angels been near me ?

A girl's fancies, it may be said.

And perhaps not altogether in my line.

Still, I was glad to think myself capable of having such fancies.

Next day, we all went to church together in the morning. I found there were a great many allusions in the psalms and prayers to Martin and myself, and wondered they had not struck me before. More fancies, perhaps.

That afternoon, directly after dinner, uncle ordered the cart. Martin wanted to see his mother, and uncle thought he would go too, and judge for himself how matters were going on.

I may as well recount here what I learnt had happened from them on their return. Old Martin had given up preaching since his confinement in jail. It was more from anger and sullenness than shame, or,

at any rate, repentance. He was hurt and wounded by what had befallen him, but the idea of turning over a new leaf did not present itself, because he considered the rector and the magistrates in the wrong, and himself in the right. If he was sorry, it was probably for having allowed the rector to see him ; for supposing that Eli Boston would warmly support his side; for allowing a soft fool like Joe Turnbull to have an opportunity of betraying him. What moral law had he broken? If he had been a little rough and inconsiderate, still he was properly within his rights.

At least, he certainly thought frightening a pony a legitimate way of reproving a bad rider.

But when uncle and Martin arrived at Grandborough, they found Mr. Welfare had given notice he should resume his ministrations that afternoon ; and, out of curiosity, a crowd far exceeding in numbers his usual hearers was collecting in the barn. Whilst Martin went up to see his mother, Mr. Boston sat in the parlour and sent in his name to the old man who was in the office with the door closed. Word came back that Mr. Welfare never saw anyone on the Sabbath. However, when Martin came down, he and uncle decided that they would attend the service.

The audience filled the barn, some stood, some sat on the floor, there were a few benches, and on one of

these the two strangers seated themselves. The old man had a little platform with an arm-chair upon it, and he stood or sat down as he thought fit. There was a hymn, and then a prayer which Mr. Welfare conducted himself. He was probably pleased to see Mr. Boston and his son, for there was a large amount of vanity in his character.

He prayed that if unbelievers were present, their hearts of stone might be taken from them, and hearts of flesh given them instead. There was nothing else said that could apply to the Caldicote two. Another hymn, and then the preacher gave out his text, which was from the Acts, and had been curtailed by him to this :

"I would to God that all that hear me this day were altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

After a few commonplaces, he soon got into the details of his case. He declared it was a malicious prosecution, and the fact of instituting it sufficiently showed that the rector was unconverted and still in the servitude of sin.

It was an unmanly, un-English act. What did a man mount a horse for except to face all the dangers to which a horseman was liable? He illustrated his point by an allusion to a recent well-known steeple-chase at Dunchurch. Supposing that race had been run over difficult country, and Becher, who rode

Captain Lamb's *Vivian*, had fallen at a fence and broken his arm, and the fence was on his (Welfare's) farm, would Becher have hauled him up for putting the fence there? [Scarcely a similar case, but emotion was shown by the hearers.]

"I fired the gun off," he continued, "to frighten the rector's pony. The fellow rides like a journeyman tailor. I wanted to test whether he was fit to be out by himself. He does not know how to hold the reins even. Ten to one, if he had not come off when he did, he would have been run away with, and perhaps killed. If that had happened, I should have been liable to answer for conniving at suicide, in not having fired off my gun to warn the misguided lunatic."

And then he went on about the Lord's people, and how all things worked for their good; and for himself, he defied all the fiery darts of the evil one. And in a rapid survey of what he himself had suffered for his Lord, he mentioned the ingratitude of children, the false-heartedness of friends, and poltroonery of those he had raised from the dung heap, and who had betrayed his cause.

This undoubtedly referred to Martin; to uncle, who on cross-examination in court had admitted that Mr. Welfare was thought cantankerous; and to Joe Turnbull, who had managed to stave off horse-flesh prosecution by apology.

When the sermon was over the old man disappeared, and would not come out again.

Martin had to leave for Birmingham by a coach which came by about four in the morning, and generally speaking, we were early on Sundays, supping at eight, but to-night Martin said he had something particular to say to me.

I could see by a rather comical look on uncle's face that it referred to conversation which had passed between them during the drive. However, the old people said they were tired, and must go to bed ; and we were left to our chat.

When I heard what Martin had to tell me, I thought it the best news in the world.

Uncle had, it appeared, offered him a third share in the grain business. It was doing well, uncle considered, but wanted pushing, wanted more constant attendance at markets, and so on, than uncle at his time of life could manage. And Martin's aid would be of the greatest value. He had a high sense of Martin's head for business, and his integrity. But then, if Martin became a partner, we ought to marry at once. In that case, he would give us rooms at the *Pied Bull* until future arrangements could be made.

Uncle said that he proposed giving up the inn as soon as the Birmingham railway was open. But he

believed that by judicious demolitions and alterations the old hostelry might be made into a house suitable for our two families, if we chose to live together.

My heart was too full to allow me to say much then. I would not let Martin sit up, as he had heavy work before him, and he would not let me say plain "yes" or "no" to the proposition he had mentioned, and so we parted for the night. But I was up at three next morning, and got the kitchen fire lighted, and some coffee made for the traveller, and as he sat drinking it, and eating the brown bread-and-butter I had cut for him, I said, "I have thought over everything, Martin, and I will marry you as soon as you like; but come again next Sunday, and by that time I shall have decided how to deal with my relations, and you, what line to take with your father."

Of course, he promised to come. And he was in such good spirits, he did not want to go, only a coach engagement was quite sacred to him; indeed, it was impossible to stay. We took farewell of each other and then went out to the way-side to await the coach. Martin beckoned to the driver to stop, and both he and the guard were very polite to Mr. Welfare, but he had to go behind, for there were plenty of sleepy passengers. When the sound of the *Morning Star* — the down night-coach of that name —

died out, I heard wheels in the Braunston direction, and looking up the road saw a wagon approaching.

It was the heigh-day still of wagons. The luggage and parcel traffic was ably conducted by Pickford and others, and the wagons were handsome tilted vehicles, drawn by four stalwart horses, who were kept up to a vigorous walk, or even a short trot on very favourable ground, so that the distance from London to Caldicote was accomplished under the twenty-four hours. I withdrew from the road to see the horses as they passed. To my surprise the wagon stopped. One or two passengers could be accommodated at a cheap rate, and a man got out and advanced towards our place. He was no longer in livery, and was got up in the shabby-fine clothes of a London vagabond, but about his identity there could be no doubt.

He was Bates.

I felt alarmed at first, but walking down the yard, I saw one of the stable helps already at work.

Bates touched his hat, and said he was fortunate to have met me so early on his arrival, for his errand was to deliver a letter to me.

And this he took out of his hat.

I tried to seem quite indifferent, and called to the help to let Bates lie down on clean straw in one of the stalls, or in the hay loft, and I told Bates

himself he should have refreshment when the house was up.

“The bar is not open, miss?” he asked.

“No, it is not.”

So he went down the yard, and I took the letter up to my own room.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE LETTER.

THE letter was from Muzaffar Traill. I was too curious to wait and show it first to uncle. And certainly a more extraordinary production could not often before have been penned. I can only give the contents in my own words, because the peculiarities of the writer's style were very marked, and a ridiculous air would, through them, be thrown over a narrative which in its nature was sombre and tragic to the last degree.

He began with saying that misfortunes had closed around him from which he saw no escape. His money was gone, his health injured, his conscience overburdened, and he had heard from persons on whom he could rely that Mr. Marlo was intent upon dragging him to the bar of justice for a crime which, whatever his intentions may have been, he was not permitted to accomplish.

He might wrap himself in his innocence and defy

them all, for he did not believe, in a just country, any punishment could be inflicted upon him for an offence of which he was not guilty. But notwithstanding this, he was not going to appear before the public, and face such a charge as the malicious Marlo could easily trump up against him. The dock was the place for low-caste people—not for such as he was.

Besides, he had no future. He could not go back to Neendnuggur, and he could not stay in England. There was only the other world left, where unhappy ones like himself would be misunderstood no more. He had sent the present letter by Bates to get rid of him, and at the same time ensure its reaching my own hand. Bates was not a good man, but he had not found him out in any treachery, and as a small last favour from me, he would ask me to give him one sovereign. This would be reward enough for his trouble in conveying the letter to its destination. His wages had been paid up, and this present would end all transactions with him. He could not hope to repay me; but I had always taken an interest in him, and he believed I should not refuse to carry out his request.

He had got a very serious thing on his mind. It had preyed upon him—driven him to drink—to gamble, and would undoubtedly bring him to a premature death. And to confess this wearing secret

was the only relief he could imagine. And he could not think of anyone so fitting to hear it as I was.

Miss Maude had always been most kind ; but she did not know the world, and could not be expected to understand the motives which had suggested the action, he regretted to admit, he had contemplated. He would, without any subterfuge, detail his wicked design, and entreated me to make allowance for him, and to thank God with him that he had not been allowed to carry into execution what he had planned.

He had fully thought that Mr. Marlo had set his mind on marrying me to his son, Eugene. My affections, he was sure, were not really engaged in that direction ; still it was likely I should yield to Mr. Marlo's persuasions, for the father certainly favoured the son's suit, and was prepared to do everything to advance it. The lawyer hated himself, and exerted all his powers to poison my mind against one whom he represented as my antagonist. Therefore he, Muzaffar, had determined that both to upset Marlo's scheme and to punish the wily schemer, he would take Eugene's life. He had become acquainted in India with persons familiar with the preparation and use of fatal drugs, and had settled that he would use for his purpose the seeds of the datura plant, because he thought that its effects were perhaps not known to local practitioners, and detection might be thus

avoided. There was a certain resemblance, too, in the symptoms following the administration of datura to those of natural sickness or disease ; and, moreover, he was convinced that the poison was fatal, and could not be counteracted if given in sufficient quantity, and not interfered with in its action till after a considerable interval.

He had brought datura seed with him from the East, and his belief was it was more effectual when finely powdered.

Then he went on to say at some length how the devil had tempted him, (anything but his own black heart), how he had struggled against him, and been defeated. And so came gradually out a detailed account of how he had put the powdered seed into that portion of the salad which he had assigned to Eugene at the luncheon in the *Three Kings*, the day Mr. Marlo started for the east.

It was a most singular instance of self-delusion that Muzaffar should really think—and he wrote as if he was quite sincere—that he had not committed any crime. He certainly admitted that he had thought of murder, but providence had held his hand ; and the man he had hoped would die by poison really died by drowning.

Still his thoughts were undoubtedly guilty ; but here another point was dwelt on.

He did not seem to have felt any great remorse till he was told that Eugene was engaged at the time of his death to Miss Loftus.

From that moment—namely, from the time he found he *need* not have entertained any such nefarious design—he was seized with a repentance which would never afterwards leave him. And this weight of regret caused him to seek in excitement forgetfulness of the past. The letter was very long, and the latter part was devoted to a reiteration of the alleged fact that he (Muzaffar) had now been able to show himself in his true colours, and that it had been his lot to be misunderstood and calumniated.

This appeared the more wonderful in that he was himself at the instant giving the last darkest touches to a portrait which had never presented itself except in a sinister and forbidding aspect.

So persistent a representation, however, almost forces me to believe that he must have felt himself capable of somewhat better things—of a purer life and of affections more worthily engaged.

But even if he had sought it, or at least sighed for it, there was for him no place for that true repentance which is followed by a desire of reparation.

From the first time I saw him his decline had been steady and continual, and this last record of him

seemed to foretell nothing but despair and the desire of self-destruction.

In the close of his long communication, he declared that I was the only person who had made his stay in England happy ; and though he knew that designing persons had spoken to me against him, yet I had seemed to have disregarded them, and made allowances for a stranger, and one who was unaccustomed to our modes of life.

Poor creature ! When had I taken his part ? And how could he expect me to have any forgiving recollections of him at a time when he was confessing a crime against a friend I highly respected and valued ? At the same time I could and did pray God to forgive him. It was impossible to bring the feelings sufficiently under control to forgive him myself ; but many expressions showed that he was preparing to enter—unbidden—his Maker's presence, and I could not but recognise that it was a moment for human forbearance. The whole circumstances of his career were known only to One, and with Him rested the sentence.

All idea of sleep had left me.

The letter was, in every way, an embarrassing one. I could not keep the contents to myself. If Traill was still alive, they ought to be communicated to the police. Advice was necessary on this point. Then

the admissions must be told to Mr. Marlo and to poor Emily.

And I longed to make inquiries about this datura, its nature and effects. In connexion with this last item I thought of Dr. Mackintosh, and his invitation to me to call on him and his wife at any time in Bond Street.

He would be sure to know about this poison, and how it was used for evil purposes in India, and whether its effects were like those we had witnessed in Eugene's case.

When I recollected that this was the week in which I was to settle about my marriage and its disclosure, there really seemed so little time to think about anything, I felt quite bewildered. It was a perfect relief to hear uncle's voice in the yard, and to be able to go down to him and show the letter, and tell how it had been brought by Bates. We walked in the garden, whilst we were discussing what had occurred ; and uncle sent for Bates, to try and get further particulars from him. Bates, who looked very dissipated and disreputable, came to us where we were, and my uncle questioned him.

It seemed that, before the Derby, Muzaffar had been living in the most reckless way, gambling, drinking, and attending racecourses, but that his fearful losses on that occasion had reduced him at

once to actual straits. His establishment had been broken up—everything sold, down to extra clothing and personal jewellery! Bates alone had remained with him. It seems that in changing from lodgings in Piccadilly to a room in a small street off the Strand, Traill had taken some articles—a bronze clock and some old china of value—which were put by in a cupboard in his apartments. He had done this, possibly, in mistake; at any rate, as Bates declared, entirely without *his* knowledge. But Tipping, who was always sneaking about, hearing that these things were missing, had told Mr. Marlo, who again, on his part, strongly urged the landlord to prosecute Traill for theft.

A girl at the Piccadilly lodgings had told Bates all this, and he, in consequence, warned Muzaffar that a warrant for his arrest was being taken out in consequence of the missing articles, but that he might easily plead that the things had been packed with his by accident.

It is quite possible Bates himself had taken them, intending to dispose of them at leisure. He declared, however, that Muzaffar's mind was quite upset by stimulant, and nothing would persuade him but that the arrest was for some more serious charge, in connexion with an event at Deal, of which Bates professed complete ignorance.

He had then sent Bates off with the letter, which was, as Traill declared, a summons to old friends to rally to his side, and help to defend him against malignant enemies.

There was no more to be got out of Bates, except the last address of Muzaffar, and I was then very anxious to get rid of the fellow altogether. I had settled to pay the one pound which had been promised to him, and uncle was as eager as I was not to delay the man's departure a minute longer than was necessary; for he might get drunk and give trouble; and the desirability of his removal struck uncle so much that he volunteered to pay the wagon for him; and, as luck would have it, we were really able to pack him off in an hour or two. If he was wanted, the police could look him up in London, afterwards. But what should I do myself?

Doubtless my step-father would have given me advice, and have himself assisted in any steps which he thought necessary. But he was already engaged on my behalf, and I did not like to trouble him further. Moreover, it seemed very probable that I should have to announce my marriage as immediately coming off, and it would seem double to have an interview and discuss other matters, and then go home and write that I was about to start for church with a man who had not met the approval of my relatives.

I had settled to give notice of the wedding in writing. I would not run the risk of cruel reproaches ; and, indeed, I knew I could not stand any sneers at Martin. He had behaved splendidly by me, and I would stand up for him through thick and thin. I wrote a short note, merely giving the general purport of Muzaffar's letter and confession, and made one of the stable helps run after Martin's coach, as it passed.

I used to feel so mad, seeing Martin in the flesh actually close to me, and yet I not able to say a word, when I was dying for five minutes' chat. Well, after *pros* and *cons*, uncle thought it best for me and him to go up by a night coach to London, and at any rate see Mr. Marlo and Emily. As I had never mentioned anything to my step-father or my mother, about Muzaffar, except just to say that Mr. Traill had a son, and that he thought himself entitled to claim the estate as well as myself, and had sent out an agent, and so on, there was no necessity for me to consult Mr. Delafield.

I could plead, if he reproached me for not confiding in him, that I was afraid to trouble him a second time.

I wrote a second note to Martin, telling him our plans, and uncle kindly enclosed it to the landlord at Dunchurch, to be given when the *Eclipse Tally-Ho* passed through the next afternoon.

And I posted a letter to Emily, to ask her to come to the *Rose* by noon, and she could accompany us to the Marlos, for she had been anxious to see Mrs. Marlo at any rate, and, if it was feasible, to show sympathy with Mr. Marlo himself, in his family afflictions. I said I had disclosures to make; but preferred to give Muzaffar's story *viva voce*.

Dear Emily reached us at our inn in Holborn by twelve o'clock, in one of the old hackney coaches still lingering then in the streets, drawn by a pair of bony horses, and carpeted with straw, but not uncomfortable. I took her into my bedroom, and showed her Muzaffar's letter. I think the clearing-up of the mystery was a great relief to her, and there was little shock, for she had always suspected Traill. I was pleased to observe that though she was anxious that all steps should be taken to bring the criminal to account, his extreme misery had softened the desire for vengeance. Datura was a perfectly new subject to both of us, and she was very urgent that I should get full particulars from Dr. Mackintosh.

We all proceeded to Charlotte Street. I thought if we three went together, it would be beneficial. My uncle's presence would restrain Mr. Marlo, and the presence of Emily would help my uncle to keep his temper, and give something of a ceremonious character to the visit.

We were shown into the little business room. Mr. Marlo was quite calm, and received us very courteously, especially Emily. He had, however, a curious suspicious expression in his face ; and before I began to speak, got up to see that the door was closed, opening it, however, first and looking into the passage as if he feared someone was listening. Muzaffar's letter created the most intense interest in Mr. Marlo's mind. I read it out, translating, if I may use the word, as I went on, some of the odd phrases into ordinary English, to deprive the communication of eccentricity, as far as might be.

When I had concluded, Mr. Marlo heaved a great sigh, and exclaimed, " It is too late ! "

We asked what he meant, and he told us he had thought it necessary, for the " public security " (these were his words), to keep a watch on Muzaffar's movements.

" He has disappeared," he cried ; " he left his lodgings in the middle of last night, and has not returned. Nothing remains but to find the carrion, and what will that avail ? Whether in the mud of the river, or in a ditch, with a ball through his heart, what matters it ? Vengeance is defeated ! "

He remained quite silent for an instant, and then looking steadfastly at me, he said, " Alice Boston, you, have a tender heart. Women—I beg your pardon

Miss Loftus, but the remark is quite general—are often weakly, I could call it wickedly, merciful. You have not given the dog, Traill, the hint to defeat justice?”

“Mr. Marlo,” said my uncle, “keep to reasonable questions——”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Boston,” interrupted Marlo, “but I know for certain that the man Bates was sent down to Caldicote to give information of the intended escape, either into a foreign country or into another world. You have not mentioned yet, Miss Boston, how you *got* the letter you have just read.”

“I was going to inform you. What conceivable motive could I have for concealing the fact that Bates came down?”

“Oh, do let us drop that part of the subject,” Mr. Marlo exclaimed, pressing his forehead, “let us speak of *Datura*. Do you know anything about the plant, Miss Loftus?”

“No, really I do not,” said Emily.

“Do you, Alice?”

“Nothing whatever,” I answered.

“Do you, Mr. Boston?”

I cannot say I do,” replied he.

“Then,” Mr. Marlo cried out, “I shall memorialise the College of Physicians for a report on the subject.”

My uncle looked at me with a surprised face, but

Mr. Marlo caught the glance, and after a short pause, he remarked: "Too much talking often leads to extravagant talking. There is really nothing much to say moreover. I always suspected Traill had murdered my son, now I know it. With regard to steps that should be taken, whatever my maddened feelings may be,"—here he made a pause and tried to be quite calm—"my profession warns me to be cautious. We have at present only this confession bearing on what occurred at Deal. On such a basis we can scarcely act.

"If Traill was arrested, he might at once deny the truth of his confession, and declare it to have been hallucination. We should at present be helpless, and the finding at the Coroner's inquest would be against us. Something may, perhaps, be made of Bates. The persons who are interested in the comparatively small charge hanging over Traill are quite unwilling to spend money in searching him out. I see nothing better than to wait. The criminal may yet be delivered into our hands. And my feeling is, and I will ask you to adopt it for yourselves, if you think fit, that silence is on the whole desirable.

"When the time comes, if condign punishment can be assured for the offender, we will brave any publicity to make manifest the crime."

Mr. Marlo then got up, and came close to us

speaking very kindly and gently to Emily, and after a while, addressing my uncle and myself about the business and my property. He said we were powerless against an organisation like the Company. "Your step-father, Alice," he remarked, "is taking the only course open. He is trying to work private interest at the India House. You see, there is no rousing public opinion about that country. It is an Empire we have seized, have devastated and are now trying to forget. Neither the press nor the public care two straws about injustice when it is so far off. If a tramp is let off for stealing a hat in London, there is a row about a failure of justice.

"Kingdoms retaken in the East, and the robber is praised for decision of character.

"I was intemperate, Alice, when we last met, about how matters stand between us pecuniarily, but as you may imagine, there is no hurry. Take your time. We will have a settlement all in due course. Now, come up and see Mrs. Marlo."

He led us all into the drawing-room, where his wife and Miss Savile were seated. He withdrew from the door as we entered, and I heard a curious cry, like that of some animal in pain, a peculiarly startling noise.

Directly afterwards I caught Mr. Marlo's figure rapidly descending the stairs, and we saw him no

more that day. When we next met, it was under very different circumstances.

Mrs. Marlo was quite intelligent, but there was something altogether appalling in the matter-of-course way in which she took us.

It was the first time she had seen Emily since the fatal catastrophe, and she quite recollected that Eugene was dead, and that Emily had been engaged to him.

But then it did not occur to her, apparently, that anything more demonstrative would be expected than to say that it was very good of Emily to call. It had been a fine summer, and she hoped Emily had enjoyed good health. Had she been to Bognor lately? And Miss Maude? In her usual cheerful spirits, it was to be hoped?

CHAPTER VIII.

DATURA.

EMILY could come back with us for a little luncheon at the *Rose*. She had told her hosts she had a few calls to make, and should not be back till the time for driving in the park. My uncle would not have thought of asking her, but as she proposed joining our meal herself, he was most cordial, and not the least either shy or fussy.

We all considered that Mr. Marlo, in his collected mood, had given good advice. There seemed no possibility of doing anything, and silence recommended itself as a wise course, unless matters took a different turn. The only thing my uncle felt was that a responsibility attached to possessing the confession. He thought he should like a magistrate's advice on the subject. Anything like concealment was practically distasteful to uncle; and he did not wish to be the depositary of the secret of a man like

Trail. So it was agreed that uncle and I should wait upon a magistrate next morning.

Emily and I were left alone—uncle having business—in the afternoon ; and she was most interested about my marriage. I explained to her the welcome proposal that Martin should join uncle in his business, and how, under such circumstances, it seemed advisable that our marriage should take place quietly at once.

“It will be very different to what I intended, Emily, for I am afraid there can be no doubt I shall never get Mr. Trail’s property. I begin to despair.”

“It will be a dreadful disappointment to you, Alice, if your expectations all come to nothing. Will it not? I am so sorry for you.”

“It is, I confess it, Emily, a bitter disappointment. I have a sort of feeling that I have been a person of pretensions who has been found out. I know this is foolishness, because it is not supported by the truth. I did not seek the money ; I have done nothing to deserve the punishment of losing it. The treasure just melted out of my grasp. But there is one alleviation of my chagrin. I shall, I expect, have gradually to give up the idea of means. It will be some time before I know for certain that I am poor. People will only be able to say : ‘She has not got her

money yet. It seems possible she will never get it. I wish we did not care what people said."

"Yes, indeed, I wish we did not," replied Emily ; "still some respect for the opinion of others is right. Only we must use it for our guidance, not let it guide us willy-nilly. But, Alice, how about my being brides-maid?"

I was very glad that Emily had introduced this point, because I wanted to explain my wishes.

"No, dear Emily, I felt so certain that you would be one, if I asked you, that I determined not to ask you. I have enjoyed the compliment of your acceptance, in my own heart ; and yet have stuck to what I am sure is best."

"We understand each other so well, Alice," Emily said, "that I will tell you frankly exactly what I feel. First of all, you are quite right in supposing that if you asked me, I would joyfully comply. But you know your uncle's nature, that he is a man who consults his own self-respect by keeping strictly to what he chooses to consider his place. He always treats me as if I was the lady of the manor, and I know for certain he would be offended and think me presumptuous if I ventured to be familiar or tried to make him so. And with your dear good Martin, I have never got anything out of him but a hat taken off at twenty-five yards distance. When you are

married, I shall certainly come and see you, that's settled. But I agree with you, I had better not be a bridesmaid ; because I should spoil the fun, and spread a priggish atmosphere over the jolly, merry party."

As we were both agreed, it was not difficult to settle matters to our liking.

I told her I was going to ask Miss Charlotte Pogson and her younger sister, Phillis, to be my bridesmaids. I had been at school with the elder, and they were daughters of an old man named Captain Pogson, who had been connected with the Thames, and lived at Sheerness Lodge, just outside the town of Daventry. Then a little about dress. Everything as quiet as possible. I had had my dreams, when I first thought I had got money, about astonishing the country side. But all such ideas were past.

"I really do not mind your wedding being perfectly simple, Alice," Emily remarked, "because I have often thought that married life could not be fitly represented by lace, flowers, cake, champagne, and so on. It is well to have such things ; but there is no particular blank if they are wanting. I cannot think how you have found time, amidst the distraction caused by the shocking letter, to think out and settle so much."

"If your mind is very willing to dwell on a subject,

you find you can use all the spare five minutes in discussing it with yourself."

We talked about *Datura*. She was naturally excited about it, and so was I.

I had just heard the word in connection with gardening. I suddenly recollected—and when I mentioned the circumstance, Emily could recollect it too—that Muzaffar Traill was taken in a curious way when Miss Maude once alluded to some plant as being a *Datura*. We just recalled that fact, and saw in it now a pregnant significance.

"What a peculiar thing Mr. Marlo said about memorialising the College of Physicians," I exclaimed,

"And Alice! if you had seen the expression that came for one instant into his face! You could not so well from where you were sitting. It was really appalling. The higher nature seemed to have given way for the moment to the animal. The light of reason waned and you had reached the menagerie."

"He is in a very strange condition," I answered.

I had told Emily, as might be expected, about meeting Dr. Mackintosh at the convent, and the romance which he had confided to me concerning his son and poor Margaret. And now I said, "When Mr. Marlo declared that he would make inquiries about *Datura*, I thought it would be better to let him do so and did not mention Dr. Mackintosh; for all the

information we can get is desirable. But I shall call on the doctor to-morrow, in Bond Street, and ask him to tell me what he knows about the plant."

We went on talking till it struck four, and then Emily said she thought she had better go home. I walked part of the way with her, and we had ices together at a confectioner's. And then in parting I remarked, "I am not coming to see my mother this time at all ; because I shall have to write to her the moment the marriage day is fixed. I mean boldly to announce it. Nothing else can be done."

"I shall be in Caldicote, I suppose, directly," rejoined Emily, "but mind you let me know the exact date as soon as you know it yourself. Then we shall not meet again? You will be returning."

"I think to-morrow night."

Next morning, uncle and I went to Bow Street. It happened that the magistrate was just crossing the pavement to go in, as we came up, and my uncle taking his hat off, asked if we might speak to his worship for a moment in private.

He stopped to listen courteously, and appeared a very kind old gentleman. He said he would send word to us, directly. And so presently, a constable came to us and told us to follow him, which we did, and were ushered into a small sitting-room where the magistrate was looking over some papers at the

table. He asked us to be seated, and at a sign from my uncle, I proceeded, as briefly as I could, to recount that a friend of ours had died under strange circumstances ; and about the inquest and its finding, and so on. And then, after just mentioning who Muzaffar Traill was, I showed him the letter. I added I was afraid the writer might have committed suicide, as I heard that his brain was disturbed by intemperance.

"Ah," said the old magistrate, catching up the fact, "that probably is the key to the whole matter. You would not believe how many people accuse themselves of crimes when they are under the influence of drink." However, he read the letter, and judging by his looks, with great interest.

"H'm," he remarked when he had finished, "a curious and unusual story. I have read something about this *Datura* in the medical jurisprudence books. But no instance of its use ever came before me. I hope we shall not hear of it in London. We have quite enough home-made crime without a foreign importation. You were right to come to me. I do not think it is incumbent upon you to do more than to place this letter, or copies of certain portions of it, in the hands of the police. They will be able to judge how far action can be taken on its contents. Mr. White is here, and I will call him."

Accordingly Mr. White was summoned, and turned out to be an iron-grey haired man with inquisitive eyes, profusely under-marked with crows-feet, and a smooth red face, who at the bidding of the magistrate took us to his office, a darkish den with a high desk in it.

I had prepared copies of portions of Muzaffar's letter beforehand ; but when Mr. White had heard what I had to say, he told us it was very necessary he should have the original ; the sight of their own hand-writing often upset people into unguarded admissions, whilst a curtailed copy suggested denial by the obvious fact that in truth the suspected person had *not* written that particular writing.

Mr. White found that much could not be done. The police started with the finding of the inquest against them, and it was ten to one the writer of this letter would be discovered intoxicated. However, he would do what he could for us ; and he took our address and that of Mr. Marlo. I told him at parting that Muzaffar had been called the " Black Prince " in sporting circles, and was understood to have lost heavily on the Derby. Mr. White had heard of him.

" Do you expect you will trace him ? " my uncle asked.

" Well," answered Mr. White, " you see the East and South of London are large places. And these

chaps who are down on their luck do not go out much in the daylight. And amongst a lot shackling about in the dark, mostly in rags, it is not so easy to mark any particular one."

"You would be likely to hear if the poor wretch destroyed himself?" I put in.

"Is is difficult to ask you to believe," replied Mr. White, "what does not seem likely. But a crowd of folks disappear yearly in London."

"Really," observed my uncle, "I should not have thought that."

Mr. White shook his head gently and murmured, "O, a crowd. Think of the river alone. And think of fires. How easy to get burnt, by accident—on purpose."

As we left the police office, uncle more than once expressed his relief at having got rid of all responsibility. Mr. White had promised to write at once if there was anything to communicate, and we felt easy at leaving the matter entirely in his hands.

From Bow Street I proposed going to Dr. Mackintosh's lodgings in Bond Street, and uncle decided on not accompanying me, assuring me that when my visit was over I had only got to pass into Oxford Street, and keep straight towards the east, and the *Rose* would come of itself.

The doctor's apartments were over a jeweller's.

He had a drawing-room in front and a dining-room behind ; and beyond that again, a study running back. He recognised me at once, and introduced me to his wife, a healthy, active woman, not good looking, but with a strong figure, and an air of great neatness about her.

She spoke very little, and listened attentively to her husband, watching the faces of strangers very closely to see if they were amused with the doctor, and herself laughing at the right places.

"Glad to see anyone connected with poor Margaret Marlo," she whispered, and pressed my hand. The doctor was very satisfied with his locality.

"It is a great thing, mind ye," he remarked, "that the shop is a jeweller's. No smell. Gold and precious stones do not smell. And then the police watching at night. No danger of fire. We have just our three rooms, and overhead our bedroom, dressing-room, and a spare bed for a lassie, a niece or a young friend of my wife, for we are very fond of young people. O, and this in the heart of London!"

I inquired if they minded the noise.

"Mind it, my dear!" the doctor exclaimed, "we love it. We are sick of the jungle, we have had enough of slowness and solitude. When we first occupied the rooms, we slept at the back. But no! it would not do. I was much more kept awake by

the silence than by any amount of horse hoofs and wheels. The astronomers may have the stars, and the philosophers the sandy deserts, but give Kenneth Mackintosh the gas lamps and the pavement. Wait till you read my scientific work on 'Man and His Planet.' "

"O Ken," interrupted his wife, "you have been a long time over it, and it has made little progress."

"Bah!" cried he in reply, "it's my jade vase, it will take a life-time. But, Miss Boston, understand that I do not quarrel with the good people who speak of a spiritual body amongst the spheres, but my position is that man's present body is meant for his present planet, the Earth."

"But, Ken, dear," remonstrated Mrs. Mackintosh "Miss Boston does not care for such subjects."

"Well, well," acquiesced the doctor, "but let me just say, Miss Boston, that Janet and I are strong and hearty, and like to see the world. We have plenty of leisure for the pictures and the music and the plays. We have no children."

He looked at his Janet, and sighed.

"No, it was not to be. But our Angus fell with his face to the foe, covered with glory; and so our cypress bough, which is an evergreen, mind ye, is mingled with leaves of laurel. Ah, me!"

When I could manage it, I told my story, and

described the strange letter I had received, and so came to the subject of Datura, and asked if he could give me any information about the plant.

"You could not have come to a better man," the doctor rejoined. "I have been a civil surgeon in the north-west of India, and have seen scores of cases in my time of poisoning from the administration of the seeds. I leave the botanical names of the order and genus and species to Janet. She can tell you another time."

"O no, thank you," cried his wife. "I think the people who gave names to plants must have been mostly out of their minds."

"Perhaps so," continued the doctor, "but to let the young lady know where she is, I will say the order is the same which contains the Deadly Nightshade. I do not agree with those who think that the Datura is not often fatal. I believe it is. If not at the time, why then in its consequences. I have often said to the magistrate, when a fellow had recovered his senses after a dose of Datura, 'If you take that chap's deposition, he will have apoplexy.' And I have seen men die from the effort of recollection. A fit at once, and off they go!"

Seeing me putting down a few notes in pencil, Dr. Mackintosh took alarm.

"You will not print me in the papers?"

"No, certainly not," I answered. "I only pop down words I should not be able to remember."

So he let me go on.

"The drug is used by thieves in the East, and I do not say they always intend to kill. They only require stupor for a certain time. But they do not care whether the victim dies or not. I conceive, if the seeds are finely powdered, they are more effective. But a really large dose must be fatal. The taste is only a little bitter. If you are pencilling you may as well get the right name. I will spell it for you : *Datura Tatula*. That is the strongest and most poisonous species. The symptoms you describe as exhibited by your poor friend are exactly those produced by the drug. First, profound sleep ; then, from applications of cold water in your particular instance, the stupor was arrested for a while, and delirium ensued. The stupor would soon have returned, probably. Did return, perhaps, after the shock of the fall. I do not think there can have been much suffering. Your Deal doctor was all abroad. I wish I had been there."

And here, some anecdotes were told of women robbed of their ornaments in serais by the wayside, having been enticed by insinuating strangers to partake of sweetmeats.

Of a cattle-thief who hired a bullock carriage, set the driver to sleep, and left him stupefied in

his vehicle, but drove the bullocks across the border.

But this is not the place to recount such adventures.

Mrs. Marlo gradually came round as a subject ; her strange apathetic condition accompanied by improved bodily health.

Dr. Mackintosh said he thought it unlikely she would ever quite recover, though there might be no danger to life. He had watched her at the convent. She might last for years, but there would remain a certain paralysis of the emotions. The old surgeon and his wife were exceedingly cordial, and begged me to come and see them again. "Make an appointment and we will all go to the theatre together," the good fellow said.

It was very pleasant to me to announce without any explanation that I was going to be married.

"And quite right too," enthusiastically exclaimed the doctor. "When you read my book, you will see that I advocate all girls being married. The angels, I am told, do not marry, but it is part of the system of our planet."

"And who is the happy man?" asked Janet.

"Mr. Martin Welfare the younger, a farmer."

"Then all right, Mrs. Welfare," the doctor cordially added, "it is a bargain ; when you come to

town you will bring your husband and introduce him to us. We shall be delighted to see you both."

There was mellow music to me in the words "Mrs. Welfare," "your husband," and so on.

That night my uncle and I went home. We had a great deal to do.

The day Martin drove the down coach uncle took me to Dunchurch, and I got Martin's leave to have our banns read the next Sunday. He was coming, as before, on that day, and he and I were to write letters—he to his father, and I to my mother—announcing the date of our marriage. Three Sundays for banns, and then the next Tuesday. Martin was to drive for a fortnight more, and afterwards get a substitute.

When Sunday came, we got through our letters. We took the same line, pretty well.

It was too late for arguments. My people's objection to the match was the man.

I was not going to condescend to make any excuses on that head.

Old Mr. Welfare would have opposed our union on two principal grounds. First, he had neither originated nor sanctioned the marriage in its present aspect. And secondly, Alice Boston had no money. Her treasure had turned into withered leaves. Nothing that Martin could urge would alter the facts. His

father had *not* been consulted, and as far as could be at present discovered, I *was* penniless.

So nothing remained but in very civil language to announce the ceremony as one which, God willing, would take place on the Tuesday settled upon, fathers and mothers notwithstanding.

I suppose we were not acting what is called prudently.

We were launching our happiness, like a paper boat, on the stream—the hurrying stream.

But nothing venture, nothing have.

Emily says the world has been civilised by rashness.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR BETTER—FOR WORSE.

THE banns were read out that day in church.

We had had a discussion as to what I should call myself. It was settled at last : " Alice Rose Boston, spinster, of this parish."

I was determined not to give up the dear old appellation, " Boston," till it merged in " Welfare."

During the week I got a letter from Mr. Delafield, enclosing another from my mother.

My step-father went so far as to say that it was a great privilege for a girl to marry the man on whom she had first fixed her affections.

He dwelt no longer on the expectation of my throwing in my lot with him and my mother, and enclosed me a cheque for £50.

I did not know what to think of this cheque. If it meant, " You have claims on me as the daughter of my wife, I hereby discharge them," it was obviously absurd. If I had *any* claims, they were infinitely

greater. I decided in my own mind that I would not even acknowledge its receipt till I had seen Martin for a few minutes at Dunchurch. I half fancied he might be offended. The sum seemed to me even rather insulting, but I had no wish to have any misunderstanding with my people.

The wording of my mother's letter was affectionate ; she wished me every happiness and all the rest of it, but it is difficult to give the impression of writing from your heart if you are not really doing so.

Martin had thought it right to tell his father that it was doubtful now if I should get any money, and he also announced that Uncle Boston had taken him into partnership in the grain trade. It could not be helped, but both these pieces of news were calculated to cause the old man the greatest annoyance. And I cannot say I was surprised when no answer came.

I had the briefest interview at Dunchurch with Martin. His behaviour showed how much he had improved. No disposition whatever to be hurt. I put it all down to his matured love for me. Presumptuous? Perhaps so. He laughed and said :

"Acknowledge the cheque, with thanks, by all means. Money is welcome any time ; I wish more had been sent. Don't give the idea of a quittance.

Let them understand the sum has been carried to account."

The guard would not let us say a word more, but I was gratified to find my lord-elect in so manageable a mood.

On the next Sunday Martin came again to us, and the banns were read a second time. I felt rather peculiar at hearing these banns. Nothing definite had got abroad about the hitch in the matter of my money. But still the gossips were rather puzzled. The preparations for the wedding were not at all on the scale suitable to an heiress. And then it was sufficiently clear that our union was not particularly welcome either to my people or at Grandborough.

The rumour had spread in Caldicote and the neighbouring villages that I was not really Mr. Boston's niece, and that my people had arrived with servants and a grand carriage and were apparently wealthy; and, therefore, the fact that the wedding was to be so quiet—that I had stuck to Martin through thick and thin, and had not accompanied my own relations to London—supplied nuts which no old lady, over her tea, could crack. However, I answered no questions, insinuatingly put though some of them were; and left evil report and good report to fight it out between themselves.

My aunt kindly allowed me to ask Charlotte

Pogson and her young sister, Phillis, for a couple of days to arrange about dresses. They were not handsome, but fresh, healthy creatures, full of affectation, but without harm about them of any kind. The old captain—if he was a captain, or skipper if he was not—was a widower; and Charlotte kept house for him, and in a very sensible way. But to judge from her conversation, the administration was carried on by the strongest passions and the most violent emotions. When a pudding miscarried—according to Charlotte's own account—she foamed, she went mad on the spot. If a jug was broken, the narrator declared, "I screamed, I stamped; I really believe Jane thought I was going to send for the constables and the fire engine."

Whilst the dress was being discussed, if there was any detail she disapproved, it was, "My dear! I shall be hissed. I shall no sooner put my foot inside the church than bang will come a prayer-book right at my head."

Phillis's difficulties lay with the male sex. She was well-grown for her age, which was about fifteen, I suppose. But she professed the most infantine terror of the so-called lords of the creation. One of her prospective trials was the pinning of favours on "those horrid men." She did not mind kind, pretty ladies,

but what should she do with those unfortunate plain creatures, the young gentlemen? I vainly pointed out that the party would be a homely one, and there would be scarcely any scope for embarrassment. This view did not suit her. She would have it that hundreds of eyes would be fixed upon her; if she lost her head, the marriage would break down. She thought she would shut her eyes if coats had really to be touched.

One peculiarity of Charlotte Pogson was, that if you said anything that amused her, the figure before you bent over and turned sideways. There was silence instead of laughter, and at last a comical face slowly uplifted itself, with a "Well! I never!"

Charlotte's second name began with an "S," her initials were "C. S. P.," and at school we often tried to find out what "S" stood for. But she evaded a direct answer, and would put off the questioner by remarking:

"O, Somerset, I suppose, or something of that sort."

And the younger sister also possessed a mysterious "T" which she would not explain.

But in a moment of confidence over the dresses I wormed out of Charlotte that "S" was for Sheerness; and then Phyllis volunteered to admit that "T" was Tilbury, adding, however, that she fancied she was

called after Lord Tilbury. This sudden creation of a peerage to meet her necessities showed great readiness. I am afraid I promised never to divulge these riparian allusions; if I did so promise, alas for broken faith!

Neither of the girls had a drop of bitterness or envy in their natures, but they were certainly full of self-consciousness.

Dear old Miss Fosh was so kind about my marriage. Fortunately, it did not occur to her to propose to supply me with anything to wear, or to assist in the decoration of the breakfast room; but she hit upon a small package of house-linen, and it proved most useful. She also insisted on coming to the breakfast, and I could not but acquiesce; so she was assigned a place of honour, and I reckoned on some showy colours in her dress to brighten up the corner where she was to be seated.

I wished Joe Turnbull could have been present, and said so before uncle, but added, "It would, however, be an expense to him, and perhaps would interfere with his work, if he has settled down to it." Uncle said nothing at the time, but he really sent Joe a little money, and told him he would be welcome on the occasion, if he could come cheaply, and with his father's consent. We heard afterwards that the elder Turnbull was pleased that his son should come,

because he had hoped that old Mr. Welfare might reconsider his verdict of dismissal.

Martin gave up driving the last week and stayed at Dunchurch, the landlord there giving him a billet and lending him a pony. The first day available I got Martin to take me to Grandborough, uncle kindly letting us have his cart. Old Welfare never interfered with anyone visiting his sick wife, and I felt extremely desirous to offer her my affection, and had no doubt as to how it would be received. I had never been to Grandborough, though it was only a short distance off. The farmhouse was in the old style, having out-houses all round it, except on one side. These buildings were chiefly rough but well protected stabling for horses, loose boxes, and sheds with small straw yards before them. There were grass fields near, where mares and colts and fillies were moving about as they liked. One side of the farm had a prospect down a green slope, and immediately before the windows was a small garden with green railings. The rooms were very low, but the parlour was spacious. Mr. Welfare kept entirely out of the way, but we were able to go up to the mother's room. She was in bed—had been for some years. A thin, thread-paper frame, and skin almost transparent, the face white and drawn, but such eyes! and so gentle and sweet. She kissed me warmly, and

would not leave go of my hand when I sat by her side.

"I cannot enter," she said, "into the rights and wrongs of the marriage. I am not strong enough."

I whispered, "There are no wrongs, dear mother." She looked very pleased at the appellation, and added, "All I want is that you should make allowances for the old man. Once you are married, I do trust he will come round. I see you have made a good choice, Martin. And Alice, you have got a good man in your husband. I ought not to say it. But he was a good boy from the first; gentle and brave and spoke the truth. You will not be unhappy with him. And you will take care of him, won't you? I know you will. Tend his house, and see to his linen, and spare him bitter answers. And the Lord bless you both!" She spread her hands towards us, and remained silent in prayer. Afterwards we told her some of our plans, and she asked a few natural questions as to the guests, our dresses, etc. But excitement was bad for her, and Martin presently drew me away after what had been a most interesting interview to me.

I was a good deal upset, and I pressed Martin's arm as we drove off, and whispered, "I will try and do all she said."

"There was no call for advice, but she meant well,"

he answered. "If anyone could have excused a hard word, it would have been poor father, with his tempers, and the bees in his bonnet. But he never got it from mother. And so, I suppose, she thinks if I turn out like him, you ought to turn out like her."

"You will never be like your father, Martin," I said.

"I will try not," he replied, "but in some things he is all right. He is truthful and honest and straightforward. So that I should wish to be like him in his integrity, only not in his waywardness and self-will."

The eventful day came at last.

I happened to observe that my uncle drove out of the yard about eight o'clock. But I did not attach any importance to the incident. And afterwards there was much to think of. One of the *Wonder* helps had been a postilion, and uncle got him to ride, and sent over the chaise to fetch Captain Pogson and his daughters. When it was known Joe could come, Martin had settled he should be his best man. He was in the house. Mr. Drabble was asked, and one or two Daventry people; and a few friends from villages close at hand—perhaps twenty in all. We had to be married before twelve, so there was no time for dawdling. All was as simple as possible. It was

an exquisite August day ; and white looked as appropriate to the season as to the occasion. My dress was of *mousseline de laine*. I had no veil, but a bonnet with orange flowers inside, just above my forehead, for the bonnets were a good size, and at that time tilted up in front. The Pogson girls had book muslins, with cherry-coloured ribbons, and looked bright and nice. We walked to the church, but Martin and I were to drive back in the chaise. We formed quite a small procession down the village, which was joined by Miss Fosh at Pie Court. The street was full of people.

As I walked up the aisle with my uncle, Dr. Loftus came out of the vestry ; and who should step forward with him but Emily. Yes, the dear, true Emily had written privately to my uncle to bring the tax-cart to Braunston, where she would leave the coach. And he had gone out, and got her to the Vicarage by the little lane that turns down by the canal bridge to the back of Caldicote. My heart was very full at seeing Emily, and I really thought I should have a slight break-down ; but I fought against it, and soon recovered nerve. Martin looked very neat in his cutaway coat, and his figure and face would have been considered good anywhere. Emily stood very near me, and when the ceremony was over was the first to kiss me. She came, too, into the vestry, and she

whispered as I was leaving, "God bless you, dear Alice. I see, when one is near him, he is very handsome."

She slipt somehow down the side aisle, so as to be at the church door when we came out. And as we got into the chaise, she put inside a small basket I observed she was carrying. She shook hands heartily with Martin.

We opened the basket on the way to the *Pied Bull*, and found presents in it : a gold watch from my step-father, a pearl bracelet from mother, and a brooch of the Roman gold work, which had belonged to Emily's mother, and was now presented to me, I knew, as an especial mark of affection. There was also a handsome garnet double breast-pin from my step-father for Martin.

We were a very merry party in the best room down-stairs. Phyllis Pogson had got over her dislike to the opposite sex, and had taken a great fancy to Joe, who was very funny and amused her greatly. She became quite natural, and clapped her hands when anything was said she liked.

But Charlotte, though also sitting close to Joe, made great play with a young farmer on the other side, though she occasionally glanced round at Joe to see how he was getting on. She was over formal in her phrases when he spoke to her : "I beg your pardon, what did you say?"—and so on.

I overheard one little fragment of conversation between them. Joe remarked:

“I wonder whether it is catching?”

“I do not quite take you,” replied Charlotte; “what is catching?”

“No, I mean like measles or chicken-pox,” exclaimed Joe——

“But what is catching? I must have missed something,” remonstrated the young lady.

“Not through clothes of course, or from sitting in the same room, but it might get into the air.”

“But *what* might get into the air?”

“Did you not hear what I said at first?”

“But you did not say even at first what you were alluding to.”

“Oh, then I must have forgotten.”

“But you can remember now?”

“Of course I can.”

“Say, then, what you referred to.”

“Don’t tell Miss Fosh.”

“Why should I tell Miss Fosh?”

“Well then—matrimony.”

“Go away now,” Miss Charlotte exclaimed, going away also herself, by bending and turning round.

When the face came back again, with raised eyebrows, and Chinese comedy expression on it, its

proprietrix remarked, "Qualifying, I suppose, for the County Lunatic Asylum."

The old Captain Pogson was the usual square stout man of his profession, with many wrinkles under his eyes, and a very red face. We had been warned about his stories, that they were not altogether what could be wished. But Martin had promised he would try and stop the muddy stream of anecdote, and I think he must have told Joe also, for whenever the old gentleman attempted to gain the general ear, the two jocosely put him off. They either gave him some more rum—he took nothing else—or they said they knew the narrative and thought it to be an excellent one. Spirits had no further effect on the mariner than to make him forgetful and content to be silent. To be told your story is known is discouraging also. It ended in the narrator either supposing that he had told his yarn or feeling too stupid to begin it. When our health was drunk, Miss Fosh waved her fan, her handkerchief, her gloves and a nosegay, in an ecstatic manner. My uncle had taken great care of her and she had been very happy. It had been arranged with the landlady of the *Wheatsheaf* at Daventry that she should supply horses for the stage to Towcester, about twelve miles. She insisted that the use of the pair should be considered her marriage present.

We were to have our own chaise.

So between three and four we started with uncle's horses, he having promised to drive the Pogson party back in the cart. Not yet, though, for they talked of a dance. All the laughing faces were gathered round the door, but I saw that uncle and aunt had hard work to keep up.

I am sure I had.

The old, old inn, where I had been so happy as a girl! I was coming back to it, to be sure, but under new conditions, and with some obvious cares ahead. Never mind. I was certain of the man by my side. I knew he would defend me, and I knew that, God giving me health, I would make his home happy.

Joe was on the steps, and I observed that Charlotte was very near him; and, in fact, I think he had given her his arm.

She had told me, indeed, when I was dressing that Joe was a perfect wretch. "O don't speak of him! a horror! a wild Circassian out of a caravan!"

However, she seemed to have got over her antipathy. As for Phillis, she was mad with spirits, and I heard one or two of her repartees thrown at her admirers with much cunning of fence. "You *are* silly!" "I would not be a booby!" "Zebra!" and I am afraid she descended to a new question, then asked of most people, as to whether their absence from home had been noticed by their maternal relatives. Amidst

the cheers and good wishes as we drove off, I heard a slender pipe, and looking out of the chaise window, saw Joe performing on his flageolet. "Rule Britannia" was the air, I think ; and my last glance showed me a portion of Charlotte, the rest being twisted back in comic dismay at the outburst of music.

Emily had put a letter into my hand as we parted, but I had not had time to read it till now.

We congratulated ourselves on the whole thing having gone off without friction of any kind. Not the least the scene I had conjured up about a year back, but still quite a satisfactory scene.

I suppose our life consists of a good deal of events which are quite different to what we expected.

But the subdued acceptance of "it was not to be so" is bliss compared to the unavailing regret of "it might have been otherwise."

When we had passed the beautiful church of Braunston I opened Emily's letter and read it out to Martin.

It was very cordial.

"In my heart of hearts," she wrote, "I know you are doing quite right, and I warmly hope and firmly believe that you will be very happy." Then she went on to say that she had visited Brighton from Hill Street with my mother, and that the Delafields were now going abroad, and were most anxious to take her with

them. She had determined to be at my wedding, and her visit to Caldicote gave her the opportunity of trying thoroughly to gather from her father what his views were about the prolonged visit to her new friends.

"All your doing, Alice, you know. I am ambitious, I do not deny it. And if these kind people help me to the first steps on the ladder I shall always remember in whose brain originated the idea of Emily becoming one of the Delafield circle."

Then she added a characteristic admission of the survival of her old habitudes :

"I hope before I deliver this letter to have effected a most dramatic entry. 'The vestry door opened, and as the blushing, timid bride approached the altar, who should suddenly confront her but Emily Loftus, the friend of her youth! It was an unutterable moment. A thousand recollections rushed into the bride's head and oppressed her intellect. She sank fainting to the ground, but, fortunately in this case, as in that of Faust's Margaret in the cathedral, there was a smelling-bottle. Senses and order were restored at the same moment. The ceremony proceeded. But emotion had done the work of years. Emily left the church another woman!'"

But where were we going?

We could not afford more than ten days or a fort-

night. We should not get that night beyond Towcester. The *Saracen's Head* there was a well-known inn.

London the next day. And then Bognor and Dover, we thought, if we could manage it. We had a fancy for the sea.

Our honeymoon was to tremble on the waste of waters. That is rather poetical, I think, for *me*!

CHAPTER X.

OUR MARRIAGE TOUR.

WE found ourselves at the *Black Lion*, Bognor. The place brought poor Eugene very vividly before me and Emily's romance: her "Alonzo and Imogene," and the drawing lessons, and all the other events of my first stay there. And then that sad journey when I had to break the news of what had occurred at Deal. Martin thought I ought to call on Miss Maude in a day or two, as she had been kind to me, but he would not accompany me.

So I went by myself in the afternoon, and rang the bell at La Caserella. It seemed exactly the same. Miss Fosh was wanting, but a very subservient and colourless Miss Limpet had taken her place. She was understood to do accounts well, but she would not be drawn into giving opinions. The nearest approach to a decision was such a phrase as "It requires consideration," or "Much depends on the way you look at it." And these did not bring her very near the verdict

after all. But she was quiet and dressed neatly, being quite inferior to Miss Fosh in mixture of tints and startling effects.

In the drawing-room sat Miss Maude just as before, charmingly dressed, not a day older (why should she be?), scented, pleasant, artificial. She had heard my story from Emily, knew that I had turned out a Rose, and that my mother was Mrs. Delafield. She knew also that I was on my marriage tour, and it was part of her social completeness never to forget names.

I had not known her so cordial before. And it was a different kind of cordiality, without any patronage in it.

"It is very interesting to me, Mrs. Welfare, to see you again."

I tried to reciprocate kind sentiments.

She soon managed to get on my family.

"Your story is quite a romance, Mrs. Welfare. You will say I am a busybody, and know other people's affairs better than my own. But really I was once acquainted with the Roses—knew your uncle. He is a clergyman, and is still living. I have often heard him speak of your father, his brother Henry, and he always described him as a delightful person."

I was glad to get all I could out of Miss Maude about my people, for she was always right in such

details ; and I secured one or two addresses which I thought might some day prove useful.

“ Well, and now you are married, Mrs. Welfare, and I am sure I hope you will be happy. You love the country, I know. Our old families, Alice—I may still call you that, may I not ? ”

Of course I expressed myself as delighted.

“ Our old families, I was going to say, are renovated by a little of the healthy, franklin blood of the shires. I suppose it was the franklins who were the bowmen in the old days. I daresay a Welfare was present at Crecy, eh ! ”

“ I am sure,” I said, “ if he was there, he fought well.”

“ Yes, yes, our farmers are a brave set. And you will be very comfortably off. Your husband, I presume, is a skilful agriculturist ; and with your nice fortune, really you will live in clover.”

I felt a ball in my throat when my property was talked about, but managed to get out : “ That the transfer of land was an expensive process, and that the law seemed to occupy the place of a pressing creditor, demands for money being constant and urgent.”

I knew she would soon come to Muzaffar Traill.

“ What sad vicissitudes,” she presently remarked, “ our poor Nawáb has experienced. My heart bled

when I learned of his serious losses on the turf. You see, a simple and enthusiastic Asiatic, loving sport from sheer instinct, is unequally matched with our English adventurers, who make a profession of betting. He has been deceived. I trust he may be able to recover himself. Have you met with or heard of him lately? He is recruiting, I suppose, both body and purse. I do not despair of seeing him amongst us again. His princely relations will look him up."

I saw that Emily only kept her aunt acquainted with such facts as she thought suitable for her. She had not told her about my probable defeat in the matter of Mr. Traill's property, nor had she imparted to her the contents of Muzaffar's extraordinary letter.

I did not feel at all disposed to fill in any deficiencies; so I answered that I had heard from Traill not very long back, and that I feared from what he said that he was in distressed circumstances. But whether there was any chance of his having money again, I did not know, but thought it very unlikely.

"Yes, poor Nawáb!" remarked Miss Maude; "at present he appears to be in hiding, as I have had more than one communication from him, but not in his own handwriting; dictation, as he said, being necessary because he was watched. He asked for

assistance and begged that it might be sent to the care of one Mr. Bates, somewhere in the east end of London. I will look."

She went to a desk and got a letter from which she read the particular address. I tried to look unconcerned, but by thinking of the twelve Apostles I got twelve fixed in my mind, and in connexion with the Garden of Eden I could recall Eden Lane. Mile End Road was easy to recollect. The knowledge of the locality seemed desirable.

I thought it right to tell Miss Maude that the Nawáb had had a disreputable servant named Bates, and to express some fear lest he might be fraudulently using his master's name.

"No, I believe it is all right," responded Miss Maude; "I have sent money only twice, and the wording of the thanks was quite that of our oriental friend."

After a pause she remarked :

"My dear Mrs. Welfare, if I have been slow to express my gratitude, I have not the less felt your kindness in introducing Emily to the Delafields——"

"Oh," I interrupted, "I really do not know that I had much to do with it. Emily prepossesses everyone she is thrown with."

"That is true; but still the Delafields are your people, and I know you to be unselfish and kind and

Emily has every belief that when you saw there were some difficulties in the way of your going with your mother to London, you thought of her, and privately praised her up. I think the connection is a very desirable one, and I have no hesitation in thanking you sincerely."

"I shall be truly glad if Emily sees a good deal of them. The only drawback that occurs is that Miss Fosh will be left very much alone."

"Oh, that does not matter, Mrs. Welfare; Cornelia has money; indeed is richer now than formerly. You know she owns some vile nostrum for bad legs or horrors of that kind. Oh *ciel!* the very words seem to bring up the atmosphere of the lazar house. I am not sorry that she and Emily should separate. Their living together, and apart from the Vicarage, draws attention to the terrible *mésalliance* which has taken place there."

"I am very fond of Miss Fosh, and hope she will not be lonely."

"Fosh has a good heart," Miss Maude allowed, "but she was satirical. She disapproved of my liking for the Nawáb, on the odious English principle of hating foreigners. I miss her capable company, but not her bitter tongue. Miss Limpet is a great contrast. I value her opinion vastly; it almost always agrees with my own. She is silent, but like the historical parrot,

thinks the more. A valuable woman ! But how long are you going to stay here ? ”

“ Our time is very limited ; we thought of going on to Brighton to-morrow afternoon, and so getting to Dover.”

“ You will most likely meet Emily at Dover on her way to the continent. Now a bargain—I insist upon it. You must come this evening for an hour or so and have a little supper with me. To tell you the truth, I am very anxious to see Mr. Welfare. I have often found those connected with the country full of interesting information ; and I daresay your excellent husband is no exception.”

I could not well get out of the invitation, though I was not sure what Martin would say. However, I would engage to bring him. Martin was only a short way from Miss Maude’s door, waiting for me. He made no objection to the supper. As we walked along the sea-front, I saw a tall hat that could not be mistaken. It was the head dress of one Tippins, an accountant, as he called himself. Why a person of such furtive habits chose to wear so distinctive an article of clothing was with me always a point of difficulty ; but he relied, perhaps, more on his slyness than on disguises. It seems hard also to get rid of a fashion of hats, for people generally adhere to their first fancy in that particular. Who could have been

induced to make so long a hat as that which identified Tippins, is another difficulty. As he advanced, it occurred to me that he was a partisan of mine, and I should have ultimately to pay for him, so I hurriedly told Martin who he was, and we stopped him. He declared he was wholly unacquainted with my appearance, but I could not accept his statement.

"At any rate," I said, "you know Mr. Marlo; have you seen him lately?"

For my lawyer had never written about accounts.

Tippins replied that he thought he had not seen Mr. Marlo very recently; but he feared he was not well.

Then I asked after the wretched Blott; for Bognor had brought him to my mind.

The man of the tall hat was intentionally stupid at first, but gradually admitted that Blott had reached England, was then in Bognor, and was, it was thought, going blind.

"And his daughter, that poor invalid, is she dead?"

"Dead! no. She has had an operation performed, and is quite well."

Tippins thought it was his turn to ask a few questions; so he coolly inquired whether Mr. Delafield had been able to do anything at the India House about my property.

I was glad to be able to say I had not heard, just to stop the subject ; but Tippins evidently enjoyed my surprise at his knowing about my step-father and his exertions on my behalf.

Not to be outdone, I remarked, "You have come down to watch Blott?"

He answered, "Yes," without a word more.

I enquired, "What of Traill?"

The reply was, "We do not want him."

I put the words, "12, Eden Lane?" in an interrogative form. Without any surprise, he rejoined, "There or elsewhere."

"What will become of him?" I asked.

"Rope or razor," was the calm supposition.

To show great knowledge, I put the further question,

"Will the diamond charge be brought home to him?"

Tippins said, "No, madam," and bowing to us both: at once disappeared.

Very shortly afterwards, we met a Bath chair drawn by a boy. The person in it had a green shade over his eyes, but the figure was Blott's.

And a young woman, walking by his side and taking affectionate care of him, was clearly his daughter.

So whatever there was of good in Blott's character had met with its appropriate reward.

At half-past seven, we went to Miss Maude's. I gave the hint to Martin that our good hostess liked to be thought a woman of varied information, and would at any rate be pleased to be held curious about the St. Lawrence river—the old city of Quebec—Heights of Abraham and all the rest of it; and he really got on well, and showed some talent for description and anecdote.

There was only Miss Limpet present, with cold damp hands, and indulging in what Emily calls toast-and-water observations. I remarked a little superior consideration for the farmer in the repast. A cold beefsteak pie was rather a cumbrous flight for Miss Maude; and there was a brown jug of foaming ale which was foreign to my experiences of her resources. But we pulled through very well. And in a few words apart, before we left, Miss Maude showed an anxiety for my future.

"Cultivate, dear Mrs. Welfare, the Rose element as far as you conveniently can. I like your lord and master. Certainly handsome. So dark too. Quite Neapolitan. I daresay he will be a good deal from home. You will have leisure; write to me. And, dear Mrs. Welfare, you will not decline in love for Emily. Really, if Mr. Delafield, without in any way neglecting your claims, could do something for my niece, it would be very nice. Miss Limpet thinks

that seeing the world will be so good for her. In these latter days, when fortunes are rapidly made, we Maudes and Roses are a little behindhand, perhaps, in the art of accumulation. And American cleverness may well help us out in that respect. I am sure I wish you every happiness, Mrs. Welfare, and I know you will keep Emily in mind ! Goodbye."

And she kissed me warmly, and we all parted the best of friends.

Emily had told me at which hotel the Delafields stopped in Brighton ; and so when Martin and I got there, I went at once to call, but found they had gone back to Hill Street preparatory to leaving for the continent.

I wrote, therefore, to my friend, saying we were going to Dover, and hoped to catch her as she passed through.

We took small, clean rooms, by the day, in Snar-gate Street, and inquiring at the *Ship*, found that Mr. Delafield had ordered apartments there, and was expected the next afternoon. Well, they came in due course, and I took Martin to be introduced to my mother and my step-father. I thought once or twice matters would come to a dead-lock, from extreme civility and insipid commonplaces ; but Emily with her brightness and high spirits averted a catastrophe.

And the next day we were invited to luncheon, when there was less restraint, and my mother seemed even tender to me—actually once called my husband “Martin”—and remarked casually, “he was a fine young man.”

Mr. Delafield had very kindly drawn up a memorial for me, to be sent to the Honorable Court of Directors of the East India Company, begging them to use their influence to see me righted. He had said what could be said forcibly, and, at the same time, in courteous language. But I did not think he was very sanguine. He showed me how to copy it out on foolscap paper, and give it an official air, and told me the proper address. And there matters would have to rest for some months, for the directors were sure to call for a report from India.

Emily had got full permission from her father to accompany the Delafields, and she was going with them to Switzerland, and afterwards to Italy. She was full of curiosity and had been reading up, in her clever way, books of travel, and repairing, as she called it, her French. She promised to write; and when we had seen the steamer conveying them all pass the old wooden pier at the harbour mouth, we turned our steps to Deal.

I had related what had occurred there in such detail to Martin that he was very much interested in all the

localities. We stayed at the *Three Kings*, and found the excellent Doves at their parsonage. They were the only people who had been genuinely cordial to Martin, and he felt their kindness extremely. And then the different places connected with that sad tragedy were full of pathos to us. We sat on the very seat where Eugene and I had sat, his last night. We visited the Mill, where there was a fair prospect; and we pursued the strand walk to the spot where he suddenly disappeared. Nor was the bay forgotten where the body arrived; nor the church where the night-watch took place in the high wind and within hearing of the wild sea. There was nothing incongruous to us in seeking out these places on our wedding tour. We remembered with joy how our love affair had turned out; and we trusted in the prophecy of our hearts that happiness was before us, even though that happiness was not likely to be unaccompanied by struggle. Martin did not look at all the man who would succumb to ill fortune without fighting; and, in full possession of his youth and pluck, was evidently intending to at least deserve success. And I was burning to see if I could not make home pleasant,

And so, at last, as we got off the coach at the *Pied Bull*, and heard the bells of St. Nicholas, which uncle had set going in honour of our return, and when our

fellow passengers had once driven off, and we had received all greetings, we walked up arm-in-arm, and instinctively passed through into the garden and under the fruit trees where sweet words had more than once been interchanged. We were determined to stand by each other, and to make the most of the joy within our reach—and to leave the rest to Heaven.

CHAPTER XI.

EVENTS UNFOLD.

WE found that Joe Turnbull had been taken on again at Grandborough. He had gone straight over to the old man and had begged his pardon, declaring that he had only acted in the interests of peace in his mission to the rectory ; had no intention of giving in on behalf of Mr. Welfare, as he was not authorised to do that, and he would admit generally that he ought to have asked leave before going.

Old Mr. Welfare was grievously hard up for assistance, and yet too proud to be reconciled to Martin ; and he forgave Joe so far as to let him stay on and resume work without any specified contract, and with a remark of this purport : " You deserve a bad hiding ; and if I was a younger man, I would give you one." So Joe crept in, and sent for his things from Staffordshire. I did not mind his being placed back again at Grandborough ; because I knew he had not the head to conduct a concern, though he could

do what he was told. His prospects did not interfere with those of Martin, and as he was thoroughly good-hearted, I felt sure he would always put in a conciliatory word if the subject of our marriage and the partnership with uncle came on the carpet.

Martin was very active in attending markets in connection with the grain business ; and I observed that he paid close attention to the books.

He would not let me sell Pollard's gray. The horse had turned out a strong hack, and Martin himself often used him.

Life was passing very quietly with us. Emily wrote frequently. November was just coming on, and we heard from her that the Delafields were going to winter in Rome, and would not consent to her leaving them till the spring, when there would be a return to secure a good house for the season. The only event, I think, or incident which could pass as such, was the occasional stay of Charlotte Pogson with Miss Fosh, for since my marriage day they became friends. But the first week in November a stranger arrived at the *Pied Bull*.

The inn was quite empty except for Captain Meadows, who had been so comfortable before—at least, he said so—that he came again for his hunting, which he pursued in the old, silent, melancholy way. The new-comer was a man of colour, but not quite of the

olive hue of Muzaffar ; his tint was paler and a little mellowed with red—what the possessors of it themselves call, I have been told, wheat colour. He had heavy black moustache ; his features were short and regular. He wore a shawl turban, and over warm undergarments, a blue cloth coat without a collar, and fastened in front with little buttons and loops. His trousers were black and his boots of polished leather. He had respectable luggage, but no pretensions to being a prince or a raja, or anything but, as he informed us, the Lalla Hur Sahai ; and if we had no objection, which we naturally had not, he should like to be called the Lalla Sahib. The servants, however, never got nearer his real name than Mr. Lollyside, with which the stranger had to be contented. He asked for a bedroom and small sitting-room, but was disposed to haggle over the price. The fire to be let out when he was walking abroad, and some deduction to be made on that account. He professed to be very simple in his diet, taking chiefly lentils and wheat furmety, which our cook made well. He generally drank tea, but with an occasional coffee-cup or neat brandy.

The first day, he asked the whereabouts of Mr. Traill's tomb, but after he had seen it once he never went there again. He apparently wished to be most friendly, and in a very short time confided to me that

he had something he wished to say to me in private. I told him I had no secrets from my aunt. That my husband was a good deal engaged, but could manage, I dared say, to give him an interview ; or if he preferred it, I would hear what he had got to say in my aunt's room and in her presence.

To this arrangement he ultimately agreed. And aunt and I received him in the parlour, after our dinner.

He beat about the bush a good deal at first, but gradually got on the subject which evidently most interested him. He told us that he thought it certain that I had heard from Mr. Marlo of the robbery of the Eye of Joy. That he had come home to consult as to what steps could be taken against Muzaffar Traill—who had undoubtedly been mixed up with its abstraction—had, it was believed, brought it to Europe, and disposed of it in Paris. He—the speaker—was, however, in a very peculiar situation. First of all, there were legal difficulties. The state of Neendnuggur was nominally independent. It was very true that the Company exercised considerable influence over it, through their agents ; but still it was regarded by the Company's government a foreign country ; and no sort of agreement existed between the two powers bearing on the arrest and delivery of persons charged with crimes. Muzaffar was not a

British subject, but he was a Christian and the son of an Englishman, and it was very unlikely that the Company would make him over to a government which possessed very irregular and imperfect laws, liable at any moment to be overridden by the head of the state.

This was supposing the Company had got hold of Muzaffar, but the alleged criminal being in England, it was difficult to think how even the preliminary step of arrest could be taken. But there were other difficulties. It was understood that since Mr. Marlo's departure from Neendnuggur the Raja had gone over to the views of the Durbar, and was not only willing that the prosecution of the thief should be given up, but that the theft itself should be denied. It may seem a strange thing, but the Lalla told us the Raja was very nervous about the loss. The people were not allowed the smallest voice in the administration ; their wishes were not consulted, nor their opinions asked. But an outbreak was always possible. And there were large landowners—some of them living in remote jungles—who were not unwilling to resist payment of revenue, and taking advantage of popular discontent to head a mob. The lower orders felt much interest in the grandeur of the state ; and such public property as the regalia was sincerely admired and valued. And an ingeniously circulated rumour, that

some of the courtiers, winked at by the Raja, had been bent on raising money by the disposal of the national jewels, and that fraud was at work, were sufficient grounds for a rebellion.

The Raja had therefore sent instructions that Hur Sahai was not to make the matter public in England, was to cease from further inquiries, and let the subject quietly drop, ignoring the robbery altogether, and suggesting that some mistake had probably taken place.

"But," I remarked, "I have been told that the keeper of the jewel and his wife were in prison ; what will become of them ?"

"They are safe in a jungle fort ; but I hear," said Hur Sahai, with wonderful calmness, "that the Raja thinks the rumours will be sooner forgotten if these two are dismissed."

"But if they are merely turned out, they might go about and tell any tale they liked."

"Yes," rejoined Hur Sahai, "but I meant dismissed from this mortal life. If they lose what is intrusted to them, of course they have no right to continue in the world."

It would have seemed that Hur Sahai was in no difficulty whatever. His own government wished him to do nothing, and to return home. Why did he not act as it was desired at Neendnuggur that he

should act? I cannot say for certain, but I undoubtedly suspect that he had an eye to business on his own account. Either that he should possess himself of the jewel privately, or that he should recover it publicly, and get a splendid reward for returning it to the Raja.

He evidently, from complete ignorance of European affairs, thought that if he could find out where it was, he might, through threat of exposure, induce the person possessing it to give it up. The many difficulties about claiming it, and proving the claim, even if he should discover its whereabouts, did not present themselves to his mind. He soon showed to what he was working round. He related that the hiding place of Muzaffar was known, but that the prohibition of the Raja would prevent his arrest, even if it could be effected, which there was reason to think it could not. The charge on which Mr. Marlo had hoped to place him in a dock no longer existed; for the abstracted articles had been returned, and their owner was quite unwilling to move in the case.

There was, therefore, no reason why Muzaffar Traill should hide, and he, Hur Sahai, thought that if it could be intimated to him, by a person in whom he had confidence, that he could perform an act of reparation to the Raja, and secure himself against all alarms for the future, that he, Traill, would jump at the proposal.

And now came the pith of the matter.

That I, Alice, was the person to whom of all others Muzaffar Traill would listen. This had been told Hur Sahai on the best authority, an authority, however, I could plainly see, from one or two things related, was no other than Bates.

I asked, point blank, if Bates had been communicated with, and the admission was made.

I was very angry, and I am afraid said some things which were rather severe and need not have been said.

I told Hur Sahai I thought it was a great impertinence his coupling my name in any way with that of Muzaffar.

That my knowledge of his existence only arose from the mere accident of his father having put up at our inn, and of the circumstances which were the result of that stay.

That the least he, the latter, could do, after betraying his friend, was to keep away from him, and not attempt to make a convenience of him for his own ends. I knew nothing of Muzaffar, and did not wish to hear his name mentioned again. That he had behaved very badly when he was last in the neighbourhood, and if he appeared here again, I could not answer that my husband would not take strong measures with him. That my influence with Traill only

existed in his (the Lalla's) imagination, and he was not to mention the subject again, or it would not be well with him.

What surprised me very much was that the Indian was not at all offended with me, did not resent anything I had said, and had quite the air of a man who had expected opposition, but had no intention of giving in to it at all.

The tenacious fellow never lost sight of what he wanted, and seemed to view humiliation as only one of the incidents of his pursuit.

I got Martin to stay at home the next day, and of course Hur Sahai made no allusion to the subject ; but my aunt told me afterwards that when Martin and I went out together into the village in the afternoon, and my uncle had gone to Daventry, the Indian forced an interview upon her, and entreated her to speak to me to assist in the jewel affair, and urged the great importance of my influence, in as pressing tones as if I had never been angry with him for daring to state that Muzaffar would obey me.

His self-control, indifference to rudeness, and obstinacy were quite remarkable.

As aunt told my uncle what had happened on his return, he and Martin waited upon the Indian the next morning to intimate to him that if Muzaffar ventured near the *Pied Bull*, he would be soundly

thrashed, and to hint to himself that he must not again state that I possessed any influence with the wretch, as it was insulting and disagreeable.

This warning was to be considered final, and if Hur Sahai neglected it, he must take the consequences.

Would it be believed that that same evening the young Indian tried to make a confidante of the chamber-maid, offered her money to speak to my aunt, who again was to speak to me? This action of his reaching my uncle's ears, he went into Hur Sahai's room after breakfast and told him that as he would persist in doing what he had been asked not to do, he must go away.

Not angry even with this rebuff, the obstinate creature said he would go of course, if my uncle wished it, but that he thought my uncle did not understand his own interests. He might have made a good thing of it, if he had helped instead of thwarting his plan. However, Eli Boston was firm, and we got Lalla Sahib off by that day's *Wonder*. My uncle politely attended him to the coach, and thanked him for having used the house, for his manners were always those of a landlord. But whether he had the law on his side in turning Hur Sahai out, I cannot say.

We were much relieved by the departure.

Shortly after this visit, uncle and Martin had to go to town on business in Mark Lane, and they wished me to accompany them, which I was naturally nothing loth to do. We put up at the old *Rose*, and for some hours in the day the men were absent, but a daughter of the landlady and I amused ourselves with the shops within reasonable distance. In the evenings, Martin, uncle, and I went to the theatres. One afternoon Martin came back before four, and asked me to take a turn and see the streets lighted up.

We strolled out together, and in seeking a short cut home we passed through a subordinate thoroughfare in the neighbourhood of Charlotte Street, Bloomsbury. Cabs passed down at intervals, but it was an unfrequented place as far as foot passengers went, and the lamps were distant from each other, and placed alternately on different sides.

The shops were miserable. One was for prints and engravings, and a single candle was placed in the window. A dim red light over a door marked a doctor's house, who was described on a plate as physician and surgeon, with the note that teeth were taken out carefully ; whilst on a high blind of a large window on the ground floor it was announced that consultations were free after eight in the evening. A pole drew attention a few doors off to the easy shave at one penny. The small hardware shop was closed.

There was no public-house, and Mrs. Dudlam, who was a nurse, and Mrs. Jeffs who professed to do "pinking," showed their respective presences by fan-lights so faint that they scarcely penetrated the festoons of mist which hung over the pavement. As we entered this dreary side street, in the brighter mouth of it boys playing at tip-cat called to their mates by a whistle effected by putting the fingers into the mouth. Little girls were shrieking with excitement, as they crowded in a circle to make cheeses with their scanty petticoats. I had said to Martin as we penetrated the gloom, "We might be murdered down here," when I heard a bell. It was not exactly like a muffin-bell, except from being rung at intervals. But as the sound approached, I saw a slender light, and presently there loomed before us the tall figure of a man. He was muffled round the neck, and had a cap on, but his coat seemed to be a large dressing-gown, and he wore a holland apron. We could see at once that it was only a mumming representation of a muffin-man, suggested by a diseased fancy. There was a basket, and it was filled, but I should think with pamphlets or stationery, and whatever was there was covered over with a green tablecloth. The bell, too, was a small dinner bell, taken, I expect, from the hall. As the figure passed close and rang the bell, I looked up at the face.

"Martin," I whispered, "it is Mr. Marlo, he has lost his reason."

We instinctively followed, and I touched his arm.

"Dear sir," I said, "it is a wretched night, you ought to be at home."

He stopped and looked, scarcely at us, but above us, and there was not the slightest recognition in his expression. He answered, however, slowly and mournfully:

"When friends desert, one must work for daily bread. What matters the night without? The night within, your royal highnesses, there's the rub!"

And he passed on ringing his bell once more.

"Oh Martin!" I said, "we can never leave him like this in the streets; let us come and see if we can catch Mr. Dunstable."

So we hurried away to the office in Castle Street. There we found, as I had rather feared, the doors closed, but on ringing, an old woman came up out of the subterranean regions. She gave us Mr. Dunstable's address, which was that of a house in Torrington Square. This not being far, we pursued our way to the private residence, which we found lighted up, and with a good many people in the hall and on the staircase. However, as we represented our business to be urgent, a servant showed us into a small front room, and put a candle on the table asking us to wait.

Presently Mr. Dunstable arrived, dressed for the evening, and looking very handsome and virtuous.

"Sit down, please," said he, "I am just about to deliver a lecture on 'Probable increased Excitement from increased speed of Locomotion; how to deal with it morally.'"

"Well!" cried Martin, "I hope you will give it the tea kettles, and put in a word for our poor coaches."

But I had to tell a grave story.

The apostle, however, was not to be easily upset.

"I have long observed a want of balance. I am not surprised that a crisis has arrived. I have come up here for the winter from Old Brompton to be near in case of emergency. I daresay the wife and Miss Savile will be alarmed. I will get them gradually into the suburbs. And Marlo himself shall be secured."

"And we really may trust everything to you?" I asked, "because I feel a great interest in the poor man, who has at times been very kind to me."

"You may implicitly trust me," said Mr. Dunstable with a self-approving smile, "I will arrange everything. Between ourselves, Marlo has for some time been scarcely a man of business. He has been unable to concentrate his thoughts. It may seem hard, but he will be far better in a warm and comfortable mad-house. Without care, and without necessity for

forethought, he can ring his muffin-bell, and it is quite possible may improve in bodily health. If the mind should altogether die out, he will be transferred as it were to the vegetable kingdom, and may last for years. Perhaps you will kindly call in a couple of days, and hear how matters have been settled. Have you time for my lecture? No? Well, it was very kind of you to come. It would be a scandal to have a well-known solicitor like Marlo in the streets, followed by boys performing antics and producing unmeaning noises. I will look in to-night at Charlotte Street, and will give the police a hint to watch the house till we can take medical opinion on the case. Good night, and thank you again."

And we were handed to the door by the impassive philosopher, and he went upstairs to lecture on "Excitement."

Uncle could stay a couple of days longer, and before closing hours on the second day, Martin and I went to Castle Street, and saw Mr. Dunstable. He told us all was settled.

There had been no difficulty whatever in getting the necessary medical certificate, as Marlo, though not violent, was undoubtedly insane, and he had been placed in an asylum, which Mr. Dunstable appeared to regard as a very comfortable sort of an hotel.

"I scarcely know," he said quietly, "whether I was

not admitted to partnership too late. I hesitate whether to take the old firm through the Bankruptcy Court, and establish a new house, or to borrow capital and buy the old one up. The name is valuable. I must consider the question very carefully. The Charlotte Street house will have to go. But Miss Savile and her sister will be very comfortable in the suburbs."

We felt mere insects before this self-willed man. He had acted with great promptitude, and we, at least, were not in a position to question his authority. It seemed odd there were no relations of Mr. Marlo to come forward, but as I had often thought possible, perhaps Mr. Marlo's hasty and overbearing character had alienated those who would otherwise have been glad to minister to him in his unfortunate days. Circumstances had made Mr. Dunstable master of the situation, and he was not the man to let an opportunity of domination pass by. He seemed fully prepared to grasp the rudder chance had placed in his hand.

We could only take leave, thanking him for what he had done, and thereby encouraging him to do in future what he liked, by an unintelligent acquiescence.

I told Martin I would write to Miss Savile when we got home, and beg her to explain to us what the

situation really was, and offer our services if we could be of any use.

As we were walking up from the coach to our inn, at Caldicote, I observed that there was no light in the room occupied by Captain Meadows. So as I kissed dear old aunt I asked, "Has the captain left us?"

"No," she answered, laughingly. "Wonders will never cease. Where do you think he has gone this evening?"

Daventry, Dunchurch, Coventry were suggested.

"You are on the wrong tack," said aunt. "He is having supper with Miss Fosh at Pie Court."

Martin roared. "Is it proper?" he inquired.

"O, Charlotte Pogson is there," my aunt explained.

It seemed that the name of Miss Fosh having been mentioned before the captain, he had asked whether the lady was related to a Dr. Fosh.

My aunt said, "Her father was a medical man."

When further allusion was made to Fosh's Drops, the captain, who had never before mentioned anything about his life or family, remarked: "That is very curious; when my father, Dr. Meadows, first began practice he was partner in the country with Dr. Fosh. It was before the Drops, of course. My father then came up to town, and hit on the Balsam for sore throats, which has been quite as famous as Fosh's Drops."

The idea of the two patentees living in the same village amused the captain extremely ; and, indeed, the word "patent medicine" seemed to be the *sesame* of the cells of his heart.

On the first off-day he actually called at Pie Court, and this entertainment was the result of that visit.

Miss Fosh had heard his name, but "Who," as she said, "would have looked for the Balsam in a red coat and top boots?"

There was no wonder the captain was so long in hearing of Miss Fosh, for whom did he hear of as a general rule?

"I cannot complain of the Balsam," the captain cried; "I hunt on it."

"And the Drops pay the expenses of Pie Court," responded Miss Fosh.

Emily had laughingly said to me one day, "When you are married you must look out for someone to marry me. The first duty of a young married woman is to start as a match-maker."

Well, whether it is a duty or not I cannot decide, but the thought certainly had occurred after my own wedding, "Now if Joe Turnbull could get anything like a permanent post I should like to make a case of it between him and Charlotte Pogson."

I did not think she would be unwilling.

Hearing I was back, Charlotte came to visit me the next day, and sat in my room.

"Have you seen Joe Turnbull lately?" I asked.

"What Joe Turnbull?" she rejoined, in a sham bewilderment.

"Why, young Turnbull, of Grandborough?"

"Who was at your wedding?"

"Yes; nature has only produced one Joe Turnbull."

"He has been over to see us."

"That's right," I exclaimed.

"What is right?"

"That a nice young man should come and pay his respects to a nice young woman."

"Have done. No, Alice, no imprudent dreams for me. We are too poor."

"If you are poor, you will know how to make a limited income go as far as it can."

"Phillis is still at school. Papa is very good about that. He keeps her on, though it is a great expense. I have only one servant now, an elderly woman, who can housekeep when I go out. I think, Alice, I ought to endeavour to 'better myself,' as the kitchen-maids say."

"But don't you like Mr. Turnbull?"

"For a young man he is not bad. But the sect is detestable."

"What sect?"

"Why, young men, of course. Just think, Alice, how conceited they are! They cannot give money, they cannot give clothes, they cannot give food, they are not good to eat. And if you ask them what they propose to offer in place of all these necessities they simper and answer 'themselves.' I have no patience with them."

"Still contemporaries are likeliest to be happy together, are they not?"

"No, not as a rule. There are shining exceptions." Here a surprisingly arch look. "But, generally speaking, I consider a man who thinks of marrying before he is fifty is an ape, simply a Bornese ape, my dear."

"O, Charlotte, and when a girl was just touching her radiant middle-age it would be time for hubby to die."

"But hubby would provide that his widow should be comfortable. We brought nothing into this world, and it is most fortunate that nothing can be taken out. And so hubby can leave all his earthly goods to console his unhappy relict without feeling the loss himself."

"Charlotte! what a designing, cold-blooded, Italian, poisoned-flower-giving, self-collected criminal you have become!"

"Yes, all that. But small means are at the bottom of it."

"And that is really your programme?"

"What?"

"To marry an old man."

"Yes, I think so."

"O, Charlotte!"

"But why, 'O, Charlotte?' Look here, Alice. The service says three things, "Love, honour, and obey." But of these, of course, you may take your choice. You love, I'll honour, and we will neither of us obey."

CHAPTER XII.

RECONCILIATION MISSES FIRE.

ONE afternoon, uncle lent me the tax-cart, and I drove myself over to Grandborough to see my mother-in-law.

I got to her room without difficulty, and found her gentle and resigned as usual. An hour passed very pleasantly, as she wished me to read to her, and seemed to like my company. She did not, however, hold out much hope of an agreement being come to; and unfortunately, it seemed likely the old man would feel Martin's loss less, in that he was disposed to reduce the horse-breeding, and devote his attention chiefly to farming, where Joe could help him well enough. His wife, however, said he kept the stabling and sheds in repair, though he had sold off some of his horses.

I did not like to stay long, as I was afraid of tiring the invalid, and so, after farewell, took my way downstairs. Whom should I meet, actually on the landing,

but Mr. Welfare? He half turned as if to go back, then looked to see if he could pass, finally stood still and after resting his eyes for a moment reproachfully on my face, he kissed me on the forehead.

"Come with me," he said, and led the way to his little office, and made me sit down, taking an arm-chair opposite himself.

"I do not suppose it was your fault," he remarked, not unkindly.

"No one's fault, dear father," I rejoined, "simply a misunderstanding."

"I pity you," he went on, "sincerely. You will have a bad time of it, tied to a man of that temper. Such haste, such arrogance! A little pause in business matters, off he goes and joins another concern. A word of advice about marrying too soon, and the next that one hears is that the fellow *is* married and has never asked his father to the wedding breakfast."

"Now, father," I remonstrated, "you are a man of integrity. You say you can face God. I wish you would not say so, because the Apostles even declared they were very bad sinners. But still, if you are upright, tell me, is what you have just uttered correct?"

"No," he answered, "a wrong impression might be created. The facts are right. The fellow did go into another business. I was not asked to your marriage feast. But they are coloured, and why? In the hopes,

through you, of pricking the prodigal's conscience. You must be forcible to prick a conscience. When I say to a sinner, 'You are going to fire,' I may be exaggerating. For a man with a rope round his neck, waiting the signal to be hanged, may be converted and saved."

"Well, to get on less difficult subjects, father, let me say that Martin married me because he had promised. But he could not ask your leave, because I had no money, and it was not reasonable to suppose you would like a union which would increase his expenses and add nothing to his income."

"Is it true you have no money?" asked the old man, but not rudely.

"The East India Company have not replied to my memorial ; but those who can judge think I have no chance."

"You look healthy," he remarked.

"Thank God, I am," I answered, "and fairly strong."

"And I don't suppose you have been brought up a fine miss?"

"A fine miss!" I exclaimed, as scornfully as I could ; "I can roast you a partridge to a turn, mend your stockings, put a cold compress on your throat if you had a chill, and at a pinch, would clean your boots."

This was a little theatrical, but I thought it would please, and it did so, for the old man smiled.

"If you are handy, that man will put upon you. He is an awful tyrant."

"He has his mother's nature," I remarked quite quietly.

"Now, come, —— what's your name again?"

"Alice."

"Come, Alice, then : you talk about the strict, bald, naked truth. Does your observation contain that? Is there any resemblance between an uncomplaining saint, lying on her bed of pain, as full of prayer as an egg is of meat, and a fiery young springald scorning religion, scorning affection, scorning obedience; throwing up work in a passion, tearing out to the Colonies, tearing back; tearing into a new business he knows nothing about, tearing into a church to marry a girl he is not worthy of, and whom he will very likely ill-treat and desert ——"

"Enough!" I cried out; "father, you are a born preacher, and have a gift of words; and your words run away with you, as they have done with others; and your tongue does your heart injustice. And I believe, in your inner man, when you are alone, in the dark, in the silence, you are fifty times as dear an old gentleman as you are in the village street or the pulpit."

He did not seem the least angry. He picked out from what I had said the part he liked, and left the rest.

"I do handle the Word," he remarked ; "there is no doubt about that."

He looked at me in silence, for a minute or two, and then asked :

"You feel blank without your money, I suppose?"

"I was grievously disappointed. The expectation came unsought, lightened my heart for a time, and then departed unfulfilled."

"What is this they all say about your not being Eli Boston's niece? Is it true that your own mother came in a carriage?"

"Eli Boston adopted me. I was a foundling. My mother has sought me out. She was a Mrs. Rose. She has re-married. My step-father is an American gentleman, named Delafield."

"Has he got money?"

"It is said so."

"Will you have any of it?"

"I am afraid not."

"Why not?"

"Because I did not wish to live with him and my mother."

"What objections had you?"

"I wanted to marry Martin."

"Ha!" with sudden vehemence, "and that fellow lost you your money by keeping you to your foolish promise?"

"Nothing of the kind. What was done was done by perfect agreement between us both. We understand each other. I would much sooner be Martin's wife than anybody else's heiress."

He was silent for a little while, looking towards me, but not unkindly.

Then he said :

"You must have loved Martin very much. You have given up new prospects and a fresh position for him. You were very imprudent. You will rue the day before long that you stood at the table rails with him."

"I hope not. I pray not."

We talked for some time longer ; he asked for further details of my desertion and of the circumstances which had been pleaded in its justification. And in the course of this conversation, the old man let fall some curious hints.

If Martin would admit he was wrong, would beg pardon and say he was sorry, and submit himself to guidance, things might be different, perhaps.

"You cannot deny, Alice, that you yourself declared that Martin would never act in direct contradiction to my wishes. Has he, or has he not

done so? Did he not take the serious step of marriage without permission?"

"Yes, but——"

"No 'buts'; yes, he did. You admit he did; then he ought to knuckle down. He is bound to come to me and say, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.'"

In fact, he plainly let it appear that he would not be inaccessible to repentance, contrition and apologies. I could only promise to convey his views to my husband. And so matters were left.

Mr. Welfare came with me to the front door, and before stepping out, looked out to see that the servant was not there to witness his weakness, and then kissed me affectionately. A boy had brought my tax-cart round into the lane which ran alongside the garden to the front of the farm, so that I might be clear of the yards.

And just as I was about to leave, very well satisfied with the degree of success I had had, a most unfortunate incident occurred. A little four-wheeled pony-chaise was seen approaching, with two clergymen in it. One was the redoubtable rector, and who should the other be but Mr. Dove, of Deal!

The dear old parson often travelled for the Propagation of the Gospel Society, in the character of the emissary who is termed "a deputation from the

Parent Society," and had been on this occasion to Leamington, and had stopped on his way back to hold a meeting at Grandborough. Observing Mr. Welfare, the rector had evidently had no intention of stopping, but Mr. Dove, who, as he told me afterwards, was not aware of the proximity of Caldicote, was much surprised at seeing me, and far too genial to bow only. "Stop! stop," he called, and jumping out, hurried up and took my hand in both of his. The rector hinted that the pony would not stand, but we had time to arrange that Mr. Dove should come and see Martin and me at the *Pied Bull*, and start for London from there. I promised to send a conveyance for him. And then shaking hands warmly, he joined his friend. But Mr. Welfare had disappeared.

I dared not go back, and so drove off.

I had not gone far when I heard, first a call, and then a few notes on the flageolet; and out stalked Joe Turnbull from a turnstile.

"I was told, coz, you had come," said he, "but I thought I had better keep out of the way."

I related exactly what had occurred, and that I had quite hoped the ice was giving, but the encounter with the rector was most unfortunate.

"Do explain, Joe, if you can, that it was the deputation from the Parent Society who was my friend. I had known him at Deal. I bowed, of course, to the

rector when he stopped, but he did not pull up on his own account, only to please Mr. Dove. I cannot lose the advantage I had gained. It is not wrong to pretend to dislike a person, for a good purpose? Is it? Say, I think I hate the rector a little."

Joe was much amused, and promised to do what he could, but added :

"The old pirate is always looking out for plots. He will suppose you were up to reconciling him to the rector. And peace is as disagreeable to him as it is to the gunpowder manufacturers. I'll hint the truth, but I must be very foxy, for I live with my heart in my mouth. I am on my trial, so to speak, and if I do or say anything displeasing, I shall find myself on my trunk, in the donkey cart again."

"Don't you ever come to Pie Court, Joe?"

"I have not been lately."

"Charlotte Pogson is there now."

"I know."

"How do you know?"

"She writes sometimes."

"Love letters?"

"No, bless you, not in my direction. She is gone on that old image up at your place. People should not marry, she says, till they are fifty, and I do not know what all. She declares the image has asked already whether her father was in the navy. This,

according to her, is a significant question. And yet she's huffed too, because she says the captain is only militia. And to give him an idea of her good family, she told him she was christened after the Princess Charlotte. I do not see that that would alter her birth, but there is no saying."

"It was a scheme of mine to marry you to Charlotte, Joe."

"Ah, well, I think I shall be best unmarried for the next eight or ten years ; and then if it is to be Pogson, there will be Phillis."

"But, honor bright, do you really think Charlotte is in earnest about the old huntsman?"

"Of course she is, and, by George she will succeed. The old image has never had anyone to care for him, and she flatters him. He thinks he is quite the beau. He has bought pomatum. She said so in her letter. And, mind you, she will be very kind to him. It is all right."

"And your heart is not broken."

"O lord, no. If Charlotte likes another, she is dead to me. And as there is no law yet against marrying your deceased sweetheart's sister, I shall wait for Phillis."

I begged him to ride over and tell me how Mr. Welfare took my intercourse with the rectory. It was an unlucky incident, the pony chaise coming by at that

particular moment, except that it gave us the opportunity of entertaining the excellent Mr. Dove. Uncle let me send the chaise for him, and he came and spent the night at our place.

I never knew one who recommended his principles better by his manners and actions. We were all sorry when a morning coach carried him away from us to London.

I may add here that my efforts at reconciliation proved abortive. Mr Welfare took alarm. He associated, without any just reason, peace with me and peace with the rectory together. And to be friends with the parson meant, in the old man's mind, to haul the flag down in the battle against prelacy, a state church, tithes, and many other enormities.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "STEAM POT."

NOT long after Christmas we heard from Mr. Dunstable. He told us of a private asylum in which he had permanently placed Mr. Marlo, at Peckham Rye ; and begged us, when we came to London, to call and see how comfortable his new home was, and what care was taken of him. " I consider," he remarked, " that he is well placed." He had sold the house in Charlotte Street, its furniture, etc., and had invested the money in the firm itself. Thus he had been enabled to engage a comfortable little cottage for Miss Savile and Mrs. Marlo at Peckham Rye ; as he thought the wife would like to feel herself within easy reach of her husband. By what authority Mr. Dunstable did these things we are unable to decide, but were powerless to interfere ; particularly as Miss Savile wrote to us to say how thankful she was that matters had been so nicely settled for them by the kind and considerate partner. For she had heard that at the time of Mr. Marlo's

breakdown his affairs were in considerable confusion. And, indeed, it was a great mercy to find themselves in a small but pleasant retreat, and supplied with a comfortable allowance of £200 a year, which Mr. Dunstable had arranged they should receive. This, with her own (Miss Savile's) small income, made them very independent and happy.

What more immediately concerned us was the account which Mr. Dunstable forwarded, with many apologies for not rendering it before, but there had been a press of business consequent on the reorganisation of the old firm.

The apologies were quite unnecessary.

Martin and I looked at each other as we turned over the pages of the account ; yes, really, the pages of the account. Could it be possible? Had we actually asked so many high-priced questions, and received so many high-priced answers?

Then the Indian expenses were so heavy, far in excess of what Mr. Marlo had calculated.

But the items were all stated to have been taken from Mr. Marlo's papers. He had even contracted a loan in India to raise money to give presents to all the officials at Neendnuggur. One hundred and fifty pounds were charged for taking Mr. Tippins out and bringing him back.

We were not in a position to fight Dunstable, and

after a confab we both agreed that the jewels must go. So Catchpole was communicated with, and the stones were sold at a low figure in consequence of their many imperfections. The bill, however, was paid, and we were free.

But I must turn from these troubles to some notice of the "Steam Pot" and events connected with it, which affected us and our pursuits.

"Let the steam pot hiss till it's hot,
But give me the speed of the Tantivy trot."

So they sang in those days, in ridicule of the great invention.

The Kilsby tunnel, which we had visited on an August day very memorable to me, proved a great trouble and expense. And at last the Birmingham Railway Company determined they would try and open without it. The line was ready as far as Rugby. Then came a section with Kilsby in it. So it was arranged that coaches should be put on between Rugby and Denbigh Hall, near Bletchley, and from the second place the rail took the passengers into London. Martin was offered one of the coaches, but the job was only temporary, and he would not accept it. These coaches were all painted dark green, and exactly alike; there was nothing about them of the gay variety of the road.

I had been brought up in an atmosphere of opposi-

tion to railways, but the coach proprietors and inn-keepers were not the only enemies the "Steam Pot" had to encounter.

The landed gentry, the Tory squires, were dead against the new form of locomotion. And far more strange, the large towns were very apprehensive of the approach of the line. They thought provincial celebrity would be lessened and local influence injured. "Keep off!" was a very common cry in county capitals and centres of special trade.

But besides all these, who were more or less looking to their own profits or losses, there were some not altogether unwise persons who regarded the undertaking as fantastic, partaking of some of the crazy adventure of balloons, and unworthy of John Bull's usually sober and well thought-out enterprise. The financial look-out alarmed others.

It was currently reported that the Kilsby tunnel, for instance, would cost two hundred thousand pounds (it really cost three), and it was asked what traffic would ever pay the interest on such sums?

But though our profession—I mean the one connected with the roads—lost no opportunity of throwing ridicule on the engine, I do not think its members ever doubted that they would be ruined themselves. Some believed, and said that the public would ultimately come back to coaches. Accidents from running

off the rails and running over cattle were universally expected ; and then it was thought that old ladies, and indeed females in general, and family parties, would shrink from travelling so fast, from entering dark and dismal tunnels, and from the annoyance of smoke and grime. But even those who thought there would be a reaction did not expect it till after all our establishments had been hopelessly disorganised.

Of course, on the other hand, the vast sums of money invested showed that there were crowds of affluent and practical men who firmly believed in railways, and hailed the opening of a new and triumphant era.

My uncle had long contemplated giving up the *Pied Bull*. He wanted to make the house smaller, to get rid of servants, and to reduce all unnecessary expenses.

The day for opening the Birmingham railway was fixed in the early spring of the year after my marriage. And on the last day of the same month the *Wonder* was to cease to run, and that day also was to be the last of the *Pied Bull*.

Captain Meadows was warned that he must quit, and decided to change his quarters to the *Wheatsheaf* at Daventry. We wrote to our friend the landlady, and asked her to look after him. And I personally could

not but remember that Sheerness Lodge was at a very short distance.

We determined to go and see the first train arrive from Birmingham. Martin and Joe rode, and uncle drove us in his dog-cart. It held four well. The hind seat was the more comfortable, and aunt insisted on my making myself very cosy with wraps and promising to keep quiet. Miss Fosh sat next uncle.

We drove through Dunchurch to Rugby. The station was not where it is now, but a very small place on the Newbold road ; indeed, exactly where the rail crosses the road.

On one side, under the line, a yard had been formed, and in this all the green four-horse coaches were collected.

There were crowds of country people about. Stalls had been set up, and there was the noise, and, indeed, some of the amusements of a fair.

We drove down the hill, and got to the side of the road opposite the bridge. And, after some delay, there was a buzz of expectation, succeeded by a hush ; and then, amidst loud hurrahs and decked with flags, our enemy, the modern train, rolled up. They get the funnel lower now ; my impression of my first engine is of a more angular, long-necked affair. We, of course, were glum, and tried to complain of the noise of the steam, the smell of the grease, the defiling

smoke, and so on. But the villagers were very excited ; and one old woman near us called out, " Lor, bless yer, it's just like the world of spirits." What experience she went upon we could not tell, but the expression roughly suggested the somewhat uncanny aspect of the whole apparatus. Miss Fosh declared that she was reminded of Mount Vesuvius. We did not gather, however, that she had ever been present at an eruption, and put the remark down to a lively and cheerful imagination.

A goodly body of passengers had arrived by the train, and soon filled the green coaches, which, one after the other, left the yard, and ascending the hill into the town, took the way towards Denbigh Hall. Martin had met some he knew amongst the whips, but as the last coach disappeared on the hill he rode up to us.

" We are done for," he exclaimed ; " the kettle will beat us ; we shall have to break stones on the road we used to rattle over."

We tried to be satirical and to laugh jeeringly, but inwardly we were out of spirits, and as we drove home there was very little talking.

But worse was to come.

For, as I have said, at the end of the month the *Wonder* was to be taken off the road.

My uncle, to keep his cheerfulness up, had composed

a joke, and for some days previously this pleasantry was related to callers and chance acquaintances. It was of the nature of a proverb refuted, for it denied the correctness of the common adage that "wonders will never cease." Mr. Wilcocks having business to attend to connected with a new line in life, had written to ask Martin to take the *Wonder* for the last time from Birmingham to London ; and the day before the end of the month he went by the down coach to be ready for the next morning. What was going to happen was known in the neighbourhood ; and not only from our village but from others, the peasants had collected. The horses looked groomed to perfection, and were placed by the roadside, the stable helps standing at their heads in perfect silence. Everyone was staring towards Dunchurch and listening. Joe had come over on the pony ; aunt and he and my uncle and Miss Fosh were all waiting in a group. I was sitting at a window. Exactly at the right time we heard Sutton's horn. Our ears had got practised, and we knew his note. It was the horn that had called me from joyful carelessness to dreams and disappointments, but, thank God, to immense happiness also. Martin brought the team up to a minute. He was not the man to relax discipline because his work was near its end. He had on his top-coat, with a band of crape on the right arm, and a strip of the same material on his whip.

Not a sound was uttered. You heard nothing but the pole chains being braced up, and the trampling of the horses as they were manœuvred to their places.

Sutton had got down to help to harness the new team; and in two minutes Martin raised his whip, and said, "Then I'll wish you all good-bye." And the coach went off as Martin always started, without a jerk or jar, just gliding off. Someone thought of cheering, and then burst forth "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" But in such broken tones.

I should think a cheer like that might be given to a departing emigrant ship, misgiving voices from aching hearts.

Sutton took his hat off in token of the compliment, and the *Wonder* soon became a speck on the rising ground towards Braunston.

We were all down in the mouth at dinner, to which we made Joe and Miss Fosh stay.

And afterwards my uncle said, "Well, we have seen the clearest evidence to-day of the downfall in this part of the country of a very manly and noble branch of industry. It has many claims to our respectful memory. The breeding of a highly useful class of horse was promoted by it. And in the best coaching establishments the health and comfort of the most lovable of all animals was strictly attended to. And there was another thing: the really crack drivers,

with few exceptions, were the most careful of their teams. I have it on the best authority that when a young man I know was engaged on the *Stag*, there was not a whip on the road who considered his horses so much. There was temptation to over-drive, for the *Stag* was only put on to dish another crack, the *Nimrod*, and pace was the main object.

"The coachman, too, was only eighteen or nineteen years old; but, no, somehow or other, he came to an understanding with his horses; and if they would gallop when they were in high spirits and the road was easy he let them off a little when there came a heavy bit. Anyhow, one of the proprietors said to me, 'It's money in my pocket to have that young chap drive, for though the *Stag* goes at a fancy pace the teams are not knocked up. But the fact is he loves the animals, and the horses know it.' That young man is not here to-day, or perhaps I should not say so much. But we will drink his health. Prosperity and happiness to Mr. Martin Welfare the younger."

I thanked them on Martin's behalf, and said I thought some were disposed to look down on driving as mere manual labour. But it seemed to me to require great judgment to get a good, even, fast trot out of horses of quite different dispositions; some too eager and some the reverse; some timid and some ill-tempered. Then I exclaimed, "What courage on

bad hills! What endurance through long journeys!" And I named Phil Carter as driving a great distance daily, and for months together.

"Think of keeping close attention for a hundred miles, leaving out of sight dangerous incidents and trying weather."

My uncle acquiesced, and then added:

"One glass more. I will give the noblemen and gentlemen who have supported the road. And I will mention the names of the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Algernon Seymour, and Mr. Villebois. The first was born with a whip in his hand, and the second is not only the neatest of drivers, but he is as safe as the most experienced professional."

So that toast was drunk too.

Then Miss Fosh observed: "I suppose those who drive the engine must be plucky fellows; but they are at a great disadvantage socially, they are so smudged, are they not, poor creatures? What with grime, and smoke, and oil, the senses must be tried in any intercourse with them. I suppose they are family men, but a blackamore dropping into tea and messing all the furniture must vex a clean and orderly woman."

"No public houses," struck in Joe Turnbull; "no pretty girls at the toll-house—no children to shout as you come up—nothing but flying sheep and scared

bullocks. And then, as miss says, greasy corduroys, instead of the dapper neck-cloth, the white double-breasted top-coat, and the flower in the button-hole ; it will be dull work. And those tunnels ! by George ! it must be like going where old Mr. Welfare says we most of us ARE going."

And so, with varied talk, we celebrated a kind of wake over the poor deceased *Wonder*.

The next morning when I woke I heard the sound of workmen—the pickaxe going, trampling of feet, orders being given, and the like, and passing in my dressing-gown to a window where I could see operations, I found the old sign being taken down, and the trough removed.

My aunt told me afterwards that uncle would not allow the subject to be spoken of in my presence, because he thought I should take on about it. I felt very wretched, I must own.

I dressed as quickly as I could and went down. I determined to make a fight for the actual sign, and my uncle very readily agreed that it should be hung on the large walnut tree in what was called the drying ground. This was a small close, walled in with stone fences, not very high and covered with moss and lichen. The gray, mouldering posts seemed to indicate that it had been used for drying clothes, but we did not wash at home, and so it, with us at

least, did not serve its original purpose. In one corner is a walnut tree. I have my bees in this place now—and our honey is noted! the garden close by supplies plenty of nectar. And to this day, the old *Pied Bull* hangs in the tree, and reminds me, pleasantly enough of what I never wish to forget, that I was bred at an inn.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT PEACEMAKER.

THE answer to my memorial came at last from the India House. Mr. Marlo had intimated that the Government out there were good hands at writing, and fond of the exercise. And so when a report was called for, the response was made at great length ; and it seemed to us—I mean by us, a committee of uncle, Martin, and myself—that when a telling argument was hit upon, there was a disposition to repeat it, on the principle that it is difficult to have too much of a good thing. The decision was unfavourable to my claim. I cannot say I was surprised, but however much a person may prepare for a disappointment, it does not quite lose its bitterness when it comes. The little taper, I suppose, of hope burns on, and its presence is scarcely perceived till it is rudely blown out, and then the difference is marked.

It would be tedious to mention, even in outline, the principal points of the report.

The Government view of the matter rested on strong grounds, because, even if it could not be so clearly shown why interference was inexpedient, there was always the fact in reserve that the state of Neend-nuggur was practically, or at least theoretically, independent.

But of course it was urged that the policy of alienating the revenue was a suicidal one, and in every way to be discouraged ; and then, that the object of the grant in the particular case under consideration was to provide for the declining years and family of an old servant, and that, in point of fact, that old servant was dead, and had left no family dependent on him.

Spilt milk is proverbially an accident over which tears are unavailing. And as Mr. Delafield wrote and told me that though he could, if I liked, get an obscure member of the House of Commons to put a question on the paper concerning my claim, as it was quite certain no interest would be excited, and probably a derisive answer given insinuating that the obscure member had apparently made a mistake, as no place spelt as his question-paper spelt Neend-nuggur could be found in the Gazetteer, he, Delafield, could not recommend me to move further in the matter. Our committee decided to say no more about it. The uncertainty and the long delay had,

so to speak, softened my fall, and my abdication of the position of an heiress was free from the unkind ridicule I might well have expected.

And it was pleasant to me to recollect that Martin had determined to marry me, and I to have him or no one, before Sutton's horn ever announced the arrival of Mr. Traill on that momentous summer noon.

My little Martin was born at the end of May ; it was a cold season that year, and the weather scarcely settled till the autumn ; and towards the close of June, when I was getting about again, there were some very untimely east winds.

My uncle was determined to make the house smaller, but the pulling down could only be done very gradually, and we had to dismantle the rooms we did not require. We left the hall as it was, but the bar was turned into an office, where Martin kept his books—for he was very assiduous in going over the accounts of the grain trade. His three favourite whips were hung against the hall wall : one given him by Mr. Wilcocks ; a second whip which he had used on the *Stag* ; and a silver-mounted one, a present from Major Fane, of which he was very proud. All these whips were made at Daventry ; the town had a speciality for the article, and the great London shops got the thing itself from there, though they finished it in West End style at their own workshops.

It had been quite a cold afternoon, considering the month, and baby had not been out at all. The sun was hot, and the east wind treacherous and keen. I was making tea, when I heard horse-hoofs, and directly afterwards Joe's voice. He came where I was sitting, and was evidently a good deal agitated.

"What's the matter, Joe?" I asked.

"Well," he answered, "I have come over because I do not like Mrs. Welfare's state. They have had the window open in her bedroom, as it has been sunshiny, and she seems to have taken cold. She has great oppression on her chest. The old man, you know, is all for the prayer cure. Now, of course, I don't say you ought not to pray. You ought to do so. But still you must treat an illness in the proper way. Do what you can for a poor sufferer like her, and then pray that it may be all right.

"I don't think she will get over it if she is neglected."

Martin was out, but I summoned uncle and aunt, and told them what news Joe had brought.

Uncle said to me: "You can't go without your baby, and I am sure the baby ought not to be out in this wind. I'll tell you how we will manage. Partner and I will drive over and see what matters look like, and if Welfare will let me, I will fetch old Dr. Spencer from Southam; he is a good sort, and will do what

can be done, for he is as clever as he is kind. Partner will look after the invalid, and will stay the night there if necessary. You had better send Martin as soon as he comes in. And Joe here will gallop over with a message if there is anything you ought to hear."

All this was carried out. Martin came back about seven ; and without having his horse unsaddled, rode straight off for Grandborough.

I sat up in expectation of intelligence of some sort ; and at eleven, uncle and Martin came back in the cart, having tied my husband's horse behind. Aunt had stopped in the sick room. Uncle had not had much difficulty in persuading old Mr. Welfare to call in Dr. Spencer, for the old farmer was very alarmed, and his love and solicitude for his Bessie were heart-felt and sincere. And uncle had driven to Southam, and secured the services of the old physician.

The report was that there was not much mischief at work ; the congestion of the lungs was slight, and would probably yield at once to treatment. But the real danger lay in the weakness of the patient. However, immediate change was not apparent, and a quiet night might greatly alter the situation.

Martin and I agreed we would drive over the first thing in the morning.

The wind died off in the night, and the season, as

you may say, recovered itself, so that as I travelled by Martin's side in the tax-cart kindly lent to us, with the baby on my lap, I had no apprehensions. On the way we met Joe, who was bringing the last news. The poor lady had slept a little, but was very exhausted.

The old man came to the front door when we arrived. He did not speak to Martin, but he took my hand, and led me towards the sick room. When I entered, I was greatly struck with the alteration : the sick woman was plainly about to leave this earth. She was very gentle, but had a difficulty in breathing, and there was a little trouble in her eyes from this cause. When Dr. Spencer came, he took measures to relieve her chest, and she grew more tranquil. He told us privately she could only last an hour or two, and having left instructions how alleviating remedies were to be applied in case of necessity, he took leave. It was a very solemn scene ; the old man knelt by his wife's side. I sat opposite, and by request read one or two versicles from St. John's Gospel, which the dying woman seemed to appreciate and enjoy. Martin stood just behind me scarcely able to restrain his tears. I had been giving out the verses about the True Vine, and when I came to where it was said, "Continue ye in my love," Martin's mother made a sign that she wished to be raised a little on her

pillows. We did as she desired, and then she feebly grasped old Welfare's right hand and held it forward, then beckoned to Martin to take it, and when the two hands were interlaced, she rested her lean white fingers on the bond of reconciliation, and closing her eyes, gently sank back in death.

From that hour Mr. Welfare resumed communications with Martin, and not a single word was ever spoken by either on what had occurred between them. No humiliating apologies were ever looked for or demanded from my husband ; and his father never expressed a single syllable of resentment, or forgiveness, or regret ; and neither explained anything of the past or promised anything in the future. But there was no appeal from such a settlement of the question ; and we felt that death itself had acted as peacemaker.

Having stayed all the afternoon to make such arrangements as seemed necessary, and to give orders for all that was required, we took aunt with us, and were starting for home.

Mr. Welfare had, however, a word for Martin. He called him aside, and said, " Look here, as matters at present stand, the village churchyard and the church service are thought the proper marks of respect for the dead. And poor Bessie shall lack nothing as she is now, any more than when she was with us. Therefore

you must arrange with the parson. I shall attend and say nothing. And so long as I am not required to ask him for favours or to thank him, if he should do them, there need not be any trouble."

Martin, of course, promised that he would call at the rectory, and see that everything was carried out as his father would wish.

It was about sunset when we got near our place, and we observed a man sitting by the way-side on the road leading to the village. He was foot-sore, and almost in rags, and looked altogether a forlorn object—ill and hungry—and in every way down in his luck.

Martin exclaimed, "Why that must be George, surely?" And the tramp hearing his own name, touched his cap. My uncle was down the village, and seeing us pass in the cart, hurried home to hear what news we had to give. When we had told him briefly how matters had ended, he turned to George. He was quite affected at seeing his old servant in such a plight. It was natural to ask many questions, where he had been, what had happened to him, how he had lost his work, his courage, and, temporarily at any rate, his health. But neither then nor ever after would George give the least item of intelligence. Whether he had married Kate, or whether he had found she was not worthy of his affection, or perhaps that she

was already married, were matters of the merest conjecture. And certainly if anything humiliating or disgraceful had befallen him, he had hit upon the best method of concealing it; for there was a certain dignity in his resolute determination to keep his sorrows to himself which we were obliged to respect. He had never been a drinking man, and his miserable state appeared chiefly owing to fatigue and hunger and chagrin. To a desultory query as to whether he had travelled alone, he replied, "No, that he had had a companion, one Bates, who had once visited the old *Pied Bull* with an Indian gentleman."

Where was Bates?

He was disappointed at finding no tap, and had gone down the street in search of a beer shop. My uncle told George to go into the kitchen and get some food, and he might sleep in the hay loft, and he, uncle, would see if he could find work for him.

Presently Bates came. He was as badly off as George, but had a more dissipated look, and was altogether about as disreputable a fellow as you would easily meet.

Being asked what *his* plans were, we were informed he was going to Liverpool, and should work his way out to America before the mast. What he would do in America was not apparent. But the idea then prevailed that there was a great demand across the

Atlantic for people who were absolutely useless on this side ; and a vague belief that those whom fortune had deserted in England would have another chance given them when they landed in the States.

He gave us to understand that he had long stuck to the prince, under the idea that his noble oriental relations would look him up and put him on his legs again. But Bates added, "I saw at last it was no go ; and as the chap seemed altogether done for, I deserted him to look out for myself."

This was more frank than agreeable, and as the impression produced in general by Bates was unfavourable, it appeared desirable he should be got rid of. He had only met George on the road, and they knew nothing of each other's histories.

But I wished first to learn a little about Muzaffar. It seemed he had never lived at the address Bates had given, and had been employed in an obscure tavern as a billiard marker ; but had been in constant intercourse with his old servant, and had relied on his assistance. I said nothing about Muzaffar's confession, but from what I could learn, the police had not followed up the information I had given them. Of course, what I say about the police must only apply to the police of those days, but certainly they did not seem interested in cases where there was no eager

mind earnestly pursuing an explanation either one way or the other. And where great suspicions ended in the record of a verdict of crime against some person or persons unknown, there was a tendency then to regard such a verdict as the end of the proceedings. And the person or persons unknown were left to pursue their nefarious path in life without inquiry or interference. In our case, the verdict, in some degree, excused indifference.

When I asked Bates what he thought Traill would do when he found that his last friend had left him, he coolly replied that he supposed he would take his own life, and added :

“And a good thing too, for he ain’t no good ; and there are plenty of billiard-markers without going so low as a nigger.”

I do not think Bates was quite sober, and may have made himself out more brutal than he really was ; but I could see uncle was determined to get rid of him. He gave him food, and then promised to pay his wagon fare as far as Birmingham, and actually sat up till twelve o’clock to see him off by one of the wagons which come by at that hour. These vehicles kept the road for some time after the rail was open, as also indeed did the chaises, for many were afraid of the pace and danger of the trains.

The funeral was fixed for the fifth day. I did not

attend, but uncle and aunt were both there, and everything went off as could be wished. Old Welfare walked by his son's side, and they both of them threw some of the flowers the good and gentle woman had loved, into her grave.

It would not be right to represent old Welfare as much softened. He attended in the churchyard, and listened to the service, but would not speak to the parson.

And indeed on Martin he wasted no unnecessary tenderness. But still he had made an agreement ; he had given his hand on it, and at the bidding of the person he loved best on earth, and he never withdrew from that agreement, and would always speak to his son on business or on ordinary affairs, without reservation, or allusion to the past. And to me he was really very kind, and liked my baby, actually nursing it sometimes himself, so that I had no stone to cast against him. And when I thought how lonely he would be in the old farm without an object on which to bestow his love, I wrote to Joe Turnbull and begged him to show the old man every attention.

I may say here about George that he was taken on as a general hand, and is still with us. But he always has rather a forlorn look. He does not cease to lament the inn, looks for the sign, mourns for the trough, and sadly misses the coaches on the high road.

About a fortnight had passed since the funeral, and everything was settling down into the usual routine of our daily life. I had always been fond of gardening, but now tried to devote myself more to indoor occupations, as I could not for long leave baby. Jam making would be coming on in the autumn, and aunt and I thought we would spend the present time in overhauling the house linen. Of course there was far too much, so we put by a good deal, to be brought gradually into use. There was always something to do, and it was not dull, though we sometimes found the quiet a little noticeable, after the more busy times.

We had all gone to bed one evening, but I had risen about midnight to see to baby, and heard wheels passing which seemed to stop. And after a little time, knocking at the front door and shouting, and then uncle came out and was going down-stairs.

I looked out and said, "Shall I wake Martin? Can he do anything for you?" "No, no," uncle answered, "let him be. It is something come by the wagon, I expect." So he went down.

In some few minutes, however, he came back, and knocked gently.

"Yes, uncle?"

"Wake your Martin, please; there is rather a queer job here. I should be glad of his assistance. Send him down."

And uncle again descended the staircase.

I woke Martin, and he slipped on some clothes, and went to see what was happening. Our room looked into the garden, so I could only conjecture by distant sounds that there was some accident or trouble, for voices reached me apparently suggesting different courses. Baby had gone off to sleep, and I put on a dressing-gown and shawl, and went down to the front door. It was a dark night, not raining, but gloomy and heavy, as if promising a wet day for the morrow. The men from the wagon had lanterns, and George had also got up and brought one. And something had apparently been carried and laid in front of the chestnut, over which they were all stooping.

I heard some of the conversation.

One of the wagoners said :

"We cannot take him any further. His fare was paid to this place ; and he especially asked that we should put him down at the *Pied Bull*, Caldicote."

"But," my uncle said, "you pass here backwards and forwards, you must know I do not keep an inn now. Why should you put him down here, more than at any other house in the village ?"

"He must be put down somewhere," the wagoner replied, "and if you won't have him I must lay him on the footpath. We cannot wait, it is as much as our place is worth to lose time."

"He's only drunk," said the other wagoner. "Lay him in one of the stables, and you can turn him out first thing in the morning."

"How long has he been like this?" asked Martin.

"Well," answered the second wagoner, "he was talking away at Towcester. He spoke very curious, he did. I don't know what countryman he is. He ain't English by his colour. But after Foster's Booth he went off sleeping."

"Do you think he had been drinking?" my uncle inquired.

"Well, not drinking to say drunk," the same wagoner admitted, who had declared the sleeper *was* drunk, "but fresh, like."

"We're going," remarked the first wagoner, and made off towards the road, followed by his mate, and my uncle offered no opposition.

"Uncle dear, what is the matter?" I called out.

He came up to me and told me that the man who had been laid, dead insensible, by the tree, was Muzaffar Traill.

"We cannot well let him be left on the road," uncle said, "and it is not fair to the wagoners to keep them. I will have the chap laid on clean straw, and when he's better, pack him off."

A kind of horror came over me, and a vivid recollection of the dreadful scenes at Deal.

"O uncle," I cried, "I hope it is all right, and that he *will* recover."

The burden was carried by Martin and George towards the stables, and presently Martin returned and said, "His pulse is not so bad, I don't think there's much the matter. We will send for Drabble in the morning if he does not rouse."

I had come out on the grass, for it was a soft, muggy night, and we were talking together, when George came up: "I have washed his face with cold water, and I'll sit near him till it gets light."

"Look! look!" I called out, and skirting round us from the yard gate and making for the village road, a dark figure was seen running at headlong speed.

"He has taken datura, uncle, I am certain of it; it is the sad story of Eugene over again."

The men set off in pursuit, and I went upstairs to look at baby, but came down again presently. George returned for a barrow in a short time. "He did not get far; he was just opposite the butcher's, when down he came. He won't run no more. He's as dead as a nail."

Muzaffar's body was brought on the barrow. I thought he must have had apoplexy. His face was terribly haggard with bad living, but flushed with a dark red, and his clothes were worn out and shabby.

But it was he, the murderer, evidently slain by his own disastrous drug.

I consulted with Martin and uncle whether I should state anything about his confession at the inquest which was held next day. They said no. The statement would serve no purpose, and would disseminate a painful and distressing tragedy.

Drabble testified that the deceased had evidently been drinking over a long period and died of syncope. So he said.

The unhappy stranger was buried by the parish. We had often declared, if Muzaffar came again to Caldicote he would be roughly treated. We had threatened what Miss Maude called "yeoman violence." But death again, in this instance, calmed all hostile passions. We only aided in making his funeral a trifle more decent than that of a pauper. It was a strange fancy, the miserable man's desire to reach Caldicote. He did so reach it, and lies in the churchyard by his father.

Miss Maude wrote me a long letter, desiring to know all particulars of the unfortunate prince's end; and I was told afterwards, sent an epistle of condolence addressed "To the Lady Mother of the late Prince Muzaffar Traill, Neendnuggur," and as she heard no more of it, concluded it had reached its destination. I am afraid the fact was the Dead

Letter Office in that state was not in good working order. That was all probably. Still, pity was not absent. To him, as to others, two ways were open: he chose the wrong one, and it led to destruction!

CHAPTER XV.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE! Scarcely one of Alice's words, but Lady Missenden would have it put in; and she has suggested a great many others throughout these pages, not to speak of choosing my motto. We had great fun going over the manuscript this spring.

I am finishing my narrative in 1848.

Such a year! The newspapers have been full of revolutions. However, we got over our Chartist trouble in the spring, and I hope shall do now very fairly.

The railways are firmly established, and in this part of the country the old coaching time is slowly waning into a tradition. All apprehensions about the success of the "steam pot" are over; but as a speculation, I am told, the undertaking is not so promising as was expected. They say dividends are diminishing. Still, a gentleman in the corn business, who called here about orders one day, said the dividends going down

was nothing. "The first set of investors," he calmly remarked, "may suffer ; but the second crop will succeed. Besides," he added, "you do not appreciate yet the building powers of railways. Wherever they go, people will rush into bricks and mortar."

At any rate, the landowners would now sooner have railways than not ; and the people in towns who petitioned against them seem sorry ; judging by Northampton, which would give worlds not to have banished the line to Blisworth.

I have mentioned several times the name of Lady Missenden, and I suppose it will have been conjectured that she and Emily are the same person.

Yes ; and this is how she came by her title.

The season after I was married, the Delafields, when they returned from Italy, were most anxious that Emily should spend the spring and the early summer with them in London. There was no reason why she should not. She was quite reconciled to her father, but the Vicarage was closed to her ; and her only wish to stay at Caldicote arose from her desire not to leave Miss Fosh entirely alone at Pie Court. But the Drops were flourishing under the new management, and the good lady was easy in her circumstances—a fact which, becoming known to her family, stimulated the affection of a niece, who proposed to come and see "dear aunty," and who, when

she came, proved a very good creature, and has since become more or less a fixture. Phillis Pogson is often asked to keep the niece company, so that Pie Court is seldom dull. Phillis — but why not Charlotte? Well, Charlotte succeeded in her plan, and is now Mrs. Meadows. He is well preserved and, undoubtedly, much happier than when he was a forlorn creature, dolefully amusing himself. He lives near Daventry, and potters after the Pytchley in his old pink, but manages somehow to get home early in the afternoon. They have one little boy whom they spoil dreadfully.

The London season was not a success. The Delafields could not get into the society they pined for, and my mother was disappointed, and the step-father hurt and angry. They determined to go back to America.

And Emily was persuaded to accompany them, for a time, at least. Miss Fosh promised to keep a careful eye on the old people at the Vicarage, and they both seemed to promise longevity.

It was in New York that Miss Loftus met her destiny. Sir Henry Missenden had been an Under-Secretary of State for many years, and on retiring was promoted from civil K.C.B. to a baronetcy. His son Frederick had been almost brought up to politics, and when he left the University was sent round the

world to study governments, and I do not know what else. In course of time he reached the States, fell in with Emily, and was subdued. Emily herself has since often laughed, and said, "He came for statistics, and took away love."

The marriage was approved at home, for Mr. Delafield offered a very handsome sum as dowry. He did not, however, publicly propose to make her the heiress to his property. Whether he had ever intended to execute a will privately in her favour, I cannot tell.

But events took an unexpected turn.

I had run up to London to bid farewell to my mother, and we had parted with every mark of kindness. I had promised to write regularly, and I kept my promise.

But the truth is that, though I can say without affectation that I did admire her and was proud of her, and would have loved her far more than I did if she would have allowed me, the day she put me away on the bed, propped me with the pillow, and left me to my fate, she put me away for ever. She found me, but she never found her daughter any more.

Emily had said, in fun, "You cannot lay a baby down, and come for it again in twenty years, with much chance of success."

It was true.

You cannot.

My mother did not long survive after her return to America. She seems tenderer as a memory than she was as a relation. But I desire to acknowledge that in fiery trials she was pure and courageous and self-reliant. Such fruits indicate the good tree: they are figs which could not grow from thistles.

In course of time—indeed, in rather a short time—Mr. Delafield re-married. His new wife was comparatively young, and brought him a son. There was an heir, and therefore no need of an heiress. But I have heard my step-father's property has diminished. His investments were some of them speculative, and have given way.

Before my mother's death, we more than once received sums of money from America, and we were very much obliged. They have long ceased, and there is little cause for surprise.

Martin and I have had rather a struggle.

Old Mr. Welfare let his London project of supplying harness horses for carriages fall through; and, though he kept up the stables and sheds he had built when he bred for coaching purposes, they were mostly unused. We have only just now been able to take up the idea again. Mr. Welfare devoted himself to farming, and as he grew inactive, affairs were chiefly conducted by Joe. The old man has been dead two

years, and since that event Martin has got an old coach proprietor, who had some capital, to join him in the carriage-horse speculation. Stables have been enlarged, new sheds built ; the grass lands increased, and two small subordinate farms sold. We keep up the old *Bull* stables as a convenient place from which to start the horses for London. Joe is in charge at Grandborough, and under Martin's direction promises to do well.

Our partner, Mr. Mulliner, thinks prospects promising ; but we have paid out a good deal, and the returns must be slow at first.

Never mind ; we have lived a good deal up to this on hope, and not found it bad provender.

My aunt is dead ; but the dear old uncle survives, quite in possession of his faculties, but far more silent, and less disposed to leave the chimney-corner. His corn business is moderate. He has spent most of his capital, I think, in improving it, and it pays ; but there is no thoroughfare that way to more than a competence.

Lady Missenden really enjoys a Sunday with us in the country. She came down the Saturday in Whitsuntide this spring, and stayed till Monday.

We went to Weedon to meet her, Martin driving our own roomy dog-cart tandem. My eldest boy, little Martin, sat behind as groom, and was very

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clever, holding the wheeler's head, and just keeping his left hand on the leader's rein.

Lady Missenden arrived, full of spirits and brightness—handsomely dressed, and herself as handsome as possible—carrying her valise in her hand, without any fuss. She was put on the front seat, and I and little Martin were behind.

“Don't I know this leader?” she asked my husband.

“Of course you do, my lady,” he replied ; “it is Pollard's colt. We tried to call him ‘Gray Friar,’ but the name would not stick. He is very old, but sure-footed, and goes fairly in front notwithstanding his years.”

The old place looked very nice as we drove up. We had gradually reduced the house by demolitions. They are expensive, but the old materials were so good that what they fetched has pretty well repaid us. The space in front is completely enclosed with garden hedges, and the plants and creepers looked very pretty. The old chestnut stood out grandly.

We took our meals in the Red Room, which Emily well recollected.

My other two boys, Henry and Eugene, were curious to be wherever we were ; still, I did not like to draw attention to them too much, because poor Emily had lost her little girl, and no successor has

appeared yet. She told me she the more regretted this, because Sir Frederick, though a very successful politician, and said to be sure to hold office some day, is the simplest of men, loving home and its pleasures and duties, and if there was a child, would be playing with it at every vacant hour.

Emily has quite made a hit in London ; her parties are greatly enjoyed, and her singing much spoken of. I was told she is already quite a political influence. I never hear of her drawing, and think she has given it up. But for all the praise she gets, she is not changed a bit, and throws herself into our little schemes and prospects, and declares she loves the quiet farm life. She was particularly attentive to dear old uncle, and we all get on famously, because both he and Martin have plenty of tact, and they know what Emily likes, and do not overdo things.

My son, Henry, is called after my father, and, curiously enough, he is very like a miniature the clergyman, Rose, who has been to see us, kindly gave me of his brother.

But I observed Emily cottoned to the youngest—Eugene.

“This little fellow,” she said, “I notice, is very peaceable, but he is not afraid of the others.”

I whispered, "To be worthy of the name he bears he should be gentle and brave."

Her eyes filled with tears.

Our time was fully occupied. Lady Missenden had to visit her father and Miss Fosh, and to consult the curate who has been put in charge about the parish. Dr. Loftus can read prayers, and that is all. He cannot study, but he wanders amongst his volumes, and will take a book down, and pat it, and put it back. But his mind does not retain ideas. Nursey is childish—thinks Miss Fosh Emily sometimes, and calls me Mrs. Boston. Then, in the evenings, we had the manuscript.

We took a peep at the Bath; it is kept in repair and cleaned at intervals, and, of course, Cookworthy's Rouse goes on, for abuses seldom die out of themselves.

On Sunday afternoon, Emily and I walked to the churchyard. As we passed Pie Court she said, "There is your guardsman."

"Yes," I answered, "you are right; that is Joe Turnbull."

We heard a merry laugh.

"There must be a light heart connected with that!" remarked Emily.

"I know the laugh; Phillis Pogson is staying there.

When we got to the churchyard, we strolled towards two graves situated side by side. On one was the tomb set up by Mr. Marlo to Mr. Edward Traill. We read the inscription, and then turned to the other, marked only by a single stone, bearing the name, "Muzaffar Traill."

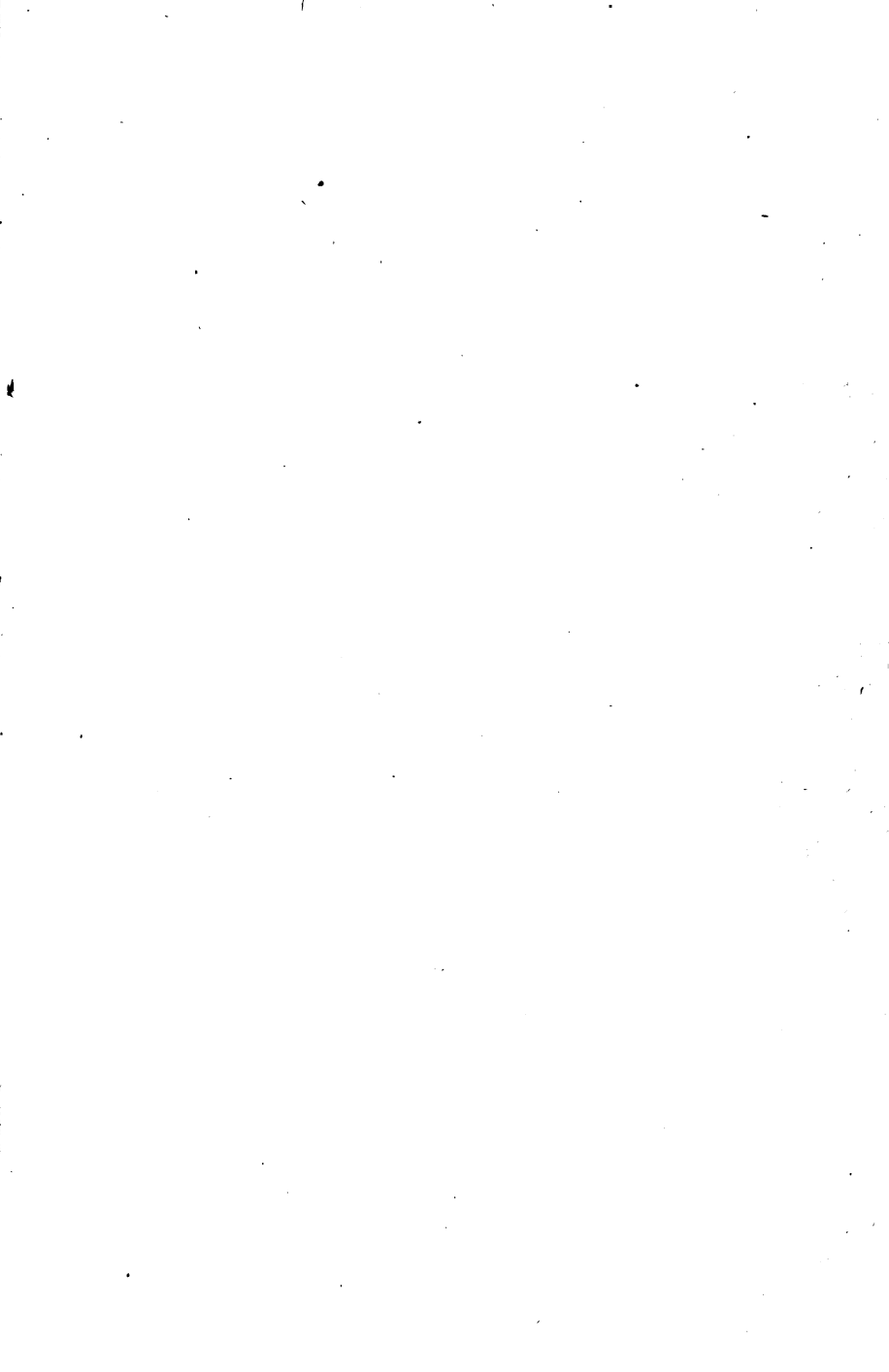
"What is it," asked Emily, "that purifies in death? See; I pluck a daisy from this unwept mound. I wish no evil now. God sees all the circumstances of a life. He is the Judge, and not we."

"Here it was," I said, "the Indian son first appeared before us—at his father's funeral. What hopes! Emily, my poor benefactor created in my breast! Nothing belonging to him is left to me but this pretty bauble." I had put on his sapphire ring. "And the jewel was refused by her he loved. He thought the sight of it would endear his memory. But he was not in her affections. She honestly said so. It was better they never married. Changes have come about, but we have reason to be thankful. I am happy, and you are happy and great."

"Influence gratifies me," Emily replied, "I admit, dearest Alice. But I am gradually being taught, I hope, that doing good is, after all, the only thing that satisfies. You have learned that peace and joy can exist without riches or marked prosperity; and I

would fain keep my heart green in all the dusty, noisy ways of life. Let us not sell our birth-right, dear old companion, for pottage of any sort—wealth, or power, or success, or enjoyment. What a birth-right ! Faith, and hope, and love : and the greatest of these three is love ! ”

THE END.





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